

Witnesses to the Russian Revolution

Edited by
Roger Pethybridge



The Russian Revolution is undeniably one of the great events in human history. This book is not intended to be a narrative history of the revolution, for as it consists almost entirely of eye-witness accounts, it is not possible to interpret the deep currents that ran together to create the storm. Its aim is to present a series of lantern slides illustrating the major events of the period.

The editor has tried to show how the people who were present and who participated in the revolution looked, talked, thought and acted. He has gathered together many accounts culled from the memoirs of innumerable men from every walk of life and political frame of mind: communists and tsarists, foreign journalists and ambassadors in Petrograd, honest Russian soldiers at the front and ignorant peasants in the countryside.

The many questions posed by the Russian Revolution—Was Lenin really a German spy? Did the Grand Duchess Anastasia really escape the murder of the royal family at Ekaterinburg only to appear in a remote part of Germany many years later?—will perhaps be resolved in future years when historians have been able to sift through the great pile of evidence now accumulating and pronounce objective judgment. They are not answered in this book. Instead, the editor has left the court, leaving the witnesses to reminisce and argue between themselves. They give us no answers; they simply allow us to relive the chaos, the agony and the high drama of the revolution through their eyes and experience.

Illustrated

*Witnesses to the
Russian Revolution*
Roger Pethybridge, Editor
George Allen & Unwin Ltd

42s. net
in U.K. only

R. Dowson

9.95

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

BY ROGER PETHYBRIDGE
A Key to Soviet Politics

**Witnesses
to
the Russian
Revolution**



EDITED BY
ROGER PETHYBRIDGE

LONDON
GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD
RUSKIN HOUSE MUSEUM STREET

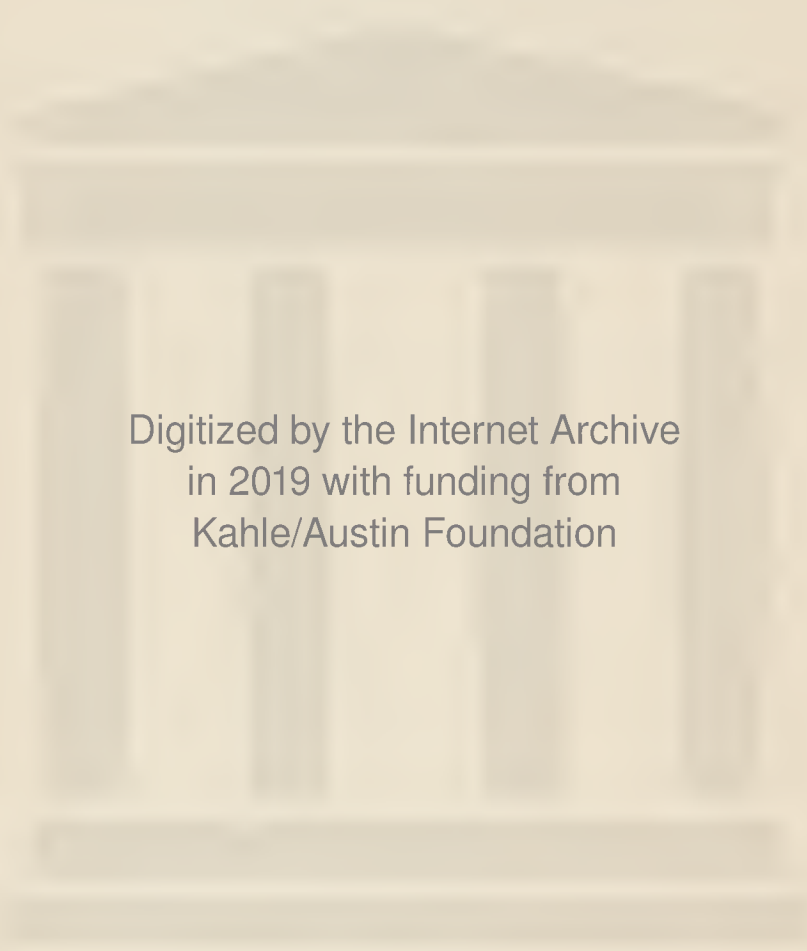
FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1964

This book is copyright under the Berne Convention. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review as permitted under the Copyright Act, 1956, no portion may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Enquiries should be addressed to the publisher.

© George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1964

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
in 11 on 12 point Juliana type
BY SIMSON SHAND LTD
LONDON, HERTFORD AND HARLOW

Still to My Parents



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2019 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

The merry wind, malicious, gay . . .
Tears and pounds and buffets the great streamer,
'All Power to the Constituent Assembly' . . .
March to the revolution's pace,
The tireless foe hides not his face.
Comrade, don't funk; take aim.
Let's fire a shot at Holy Russia—
Russia of the peasants,
Solid as wood,
Broad of bottom.

From *The Twelve* (January 1918),
the most famous poem of the
revolution, by Alexander Blok.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 13

CHRONOLOGY 19

PLAN OF PETROGRAD 23

I. 1905 25

II. *The Years Between: 1906—March 1917* 50

III. *The March Days* 96

IV. *The Interlude: March-November 1917* 140

V. *The November Revolution* 213

VI. *Postscript to a Revolution* 257

GLOSSARY 297

SOURCES 301

ILLUSTRATIONS

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The Russian Revolution 1905 | <i>facing page 48</i> |
| On board the <i>Potemkin</i> just after the mutiny | |
| 2. Rasputin with society ladies | 49 |
| 3. Nicholas II under guard at Tsarkoe Selo, March 1917 | 144 |
| 4. Street fighting in Petrograd, July 17, 1917 | 145 |
| 5. Demonstration before the Winter Palace, Petrograd, 1917 | 224 |
| 6. Rebels storming the Winter Palace, November 1917 | 225 |
| 7. The Tsar and his family on the roof of the house in Tobolsk | 288 |

INTRODUCTION

This book is not intended to be a narrative history of the Russian Revolution. Instead it attempts to provide a series of separate lantern slides illustrating the major events of the period. The lecturer with his pointing rod has gone on holiday, and the audience is free to indulge in a vivid picture show without being submitted to an indigestible mass of facts, dates and political philosophies. The student of Russian history may progress from this book to a detailed history of the revolution if he so wishes, whilst the general public stops to survey the passing kaleidoscope.

In a book of this kind, consisting almost entirely of eye-witness accounts of a great crisis in history, it is not possible to interpret the deep currents that ran together to make the storm. All that can be captured is the physical presence, the attitude of the fleeting moment—Lenin's jaunty stance, the roll of his guttural 'r's', the heat of polemics in the debating chamber, the roar of the rabble storming the Winter Palace.

John Reed, one of the most famous reporters of the scene in Petrograd in 1917, wrote in the preface to *Ten Days That Shook the World*:

'No matter what one thinks of Bolshevism, it is undeniable that the Russian Revolution is one of the great events of human history, and the rise of the Bolsheviks a phenomenon of world-wide importance. Just as historians search the records for the minutest details of the story of the Paris Commune, so they will want to know what happened in Petrograd in November 1917, the spirit which animated the people, and how the leaders looked, talked and acted. It is with this in view that I have written this book.'

The editor of the present book has also tried to show how people 'looked, talked and acted'. He cannot vie with John Reed, who actually mingled with the crowds that ushered in the Revolution and set down his impressions with an amazing freshness that still preserves them over forty years after the event. But the editor has one advantage. In the 1960s he can stand back a little from the passions of the Revolution, take a wider view of the affair, and choose a large selection of accounts culled from

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

the memoirs of innumerable men from every walk of life and political frame of mind: Communists and Tsarists, foreign journalists and ambassadors in Petrograd, honest Russian soldiers at the front and ignorant Russian peasants deep in the countryside.

The Russian Revolution was one colossal accident in which all the witnesses were biased. The historian of the future, presented with the great pile of evidence on the revolution that is now accumulating, will perhaps be able to sift the evidence and pronounce objective judgment. The editor of this book has left the court, leaving the witnesses to reminisce and argue between themselves. The trial is not staged, there is no restraint on the nature or variety of evidence given, but there can be no final issue. Was Lenin really a German spy? How far was Trotsky's role in the revolution distorted by later Soviet historians? Did Anastasia really escape the hands of the murderers of the Royal Family, to reappear in a remote area of Germany many years later? These problems, together with many others, remain unsolved. The witnesses merely allow us to relive the chaos, the agony and the high drama of the Revolution.

On reading through these tragic pages, however, one cannot help but pause to muse on the contrasts thrown up by the juxtaposition of so many divergent views of the Revolution and its chief protagonists.

Take Princess Paley's warm, heartfelt vision of the Tsarina seen through rose-tinted glasses at the time of the Tsar's abdication as a sympathetic, noble creature, and place it beside Kerensky's cold encounter with the former Empress of All Russia shortly afterwards, when he was Minister of Justice and had the power to have her physically destroyed.

Princess Paley's husband approaches the Tsarina:

"The Empress, dressed in her simple nurse's costume, struck him by her calm and the serenity of her look.

"Dear Alix," the Grand Duke said at last, "I wanted to be with you during these difficult moments. . . ."

"The Empress looked him in the eyes: "Nicky?" she asked.

"Nicky is well," the Grand Duke added hurriedly. "But be brave, as brave as he has been. Today, March 16th, at one o'clock in the morning, he signed his abdication and that of Alexis."

"The Empress started and lowered her head, as if she was pray-

INTRODUCTION

ing. Then, pulling herself up, she said:

‘“If Nicky has done it, then he had to do it. I have faith in divine mercy. God will not abandon us.”’

Now Kerensky’s view:

‘Alexandra Feodorovna, stiff, proud and haughty, extended her hand reluctantly, as if under compulsion. Nor was I particularly eager to shake hands with her, our palms barely touching. This was typical of the difference in character and temperament between the husband and wife.’ (Nicholas II had given Kerensky a warmer reception a moment before.)

Princess Paley was an aristocrat, married to a relative of the Tsar. Kerensky was a bourgeois, and a radical one at that. But amongst those who opposed the Monarchy there were whole seas of difference also. The first uprising of 1905 was led by Father Gapon, a naïve, unthinking young priest who carried aloft an ikon on his way to plead with the Tsar at the Winter Palace. He addressed his Emperor in quasi-religious terms:

‘The people believe in Thee. They have made up their minds to gather at the Winter Palace tomorrow at 2 p.m. to lay their needs before Thee. . . . Do not fear anything. Stand tomorrow before the people and accept our humblest petition. I, the representative of the working men, and my comrades, guarantee the inviolability of Thy person.’

Trotsky, another young man, also had grievances against the Tsarist régime, but he was of quite another temperament, and came from a totally different background to Father Gapon. He was a hardened atheist, an intellectual revolutionary nurtured on the writings of Marx and Engels, who had formulated a crystal-clear theory of how to manufacture a revolution. Here he is dissecting the uprising of March 1917:

‘Let us try to get a clearer idea of the inner logic of the movement. On March 8th, . . . began the long-ripe and long-withheld uprising of the Petrograd working masses. The first step of the insurrection was the strike. In the course of three days it broadened and became practically general. . . . Becoming more and more aggressive, the strike merged with the demonstrations, which were bringing the revolutionary mass face to face with the troops. This raised the problem as a whole to the higher level

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

where things are solved by force of arms. . . .

‘A revolutionary uprising that spreads over a number of days can develop victoriously only in case it ascends step by step, and scores one success after another. A pause in its growth is dangerous; a prolonged marking of time, fatal. But even successes by themselves are not enough; the masses must know about them in time, and have time to understand their value. It is possible to let slip a victory at the very moment when it is within arm’s reach. This has happened in history.’

Not only did men’s opinions differ enormously; their fates hung in the balance of the Revolution, and often changed as violently. A few weeks after being in dual command of the entire front and the government in Petrograd as well, Nicholas II after his abdication retreated into the tiny shell of his personal life, shut up in one of his vast palaces :

‘After two o’clock it cleared and thawed. Walked for a short time in the morning. Sorted my belongings and books, and sorted the things I want to take with me in case I go to England. After luncheon I took a walk with Olga and Tatiana, and worked in the garden. Spent the evening as usual.’

For Lenin, the reverse was true. From riding a bicycle through the back streets of Paris and Zürich, engrossed in petty financial and domestic worries, he found himself recasting the political and social shape of the second largest country in the world at each stroke of his pen, with every word that passed his lips.

At times of great stress, men are apt to reveal their true characters. The accounts given in this book are chiefly intended to throw light on the externals of the Russian Revolution, but incidentally they often reflect the turn of thought and character of the narrator. For example, we read constantly in these pages of Kerensky’s emotional self-dramatization, seen through the eyes of other men. When we come to read Kerensky’s own description of his escape from the Bolsheviks near the end of the book, the whole tone of the extract confirms the evidence of others and helps us to see Kerensky in the round.

Again, we learn that the Tsar was inclined to bury his head in the sands of his autocratic past at the first signs of revolt. And true to form, we find him writing nostalgically in his diary after

INTRODUCTION

his abdication and a few months before his violent death, 'After afternoon tea I re-read my earlier diaries—pleasant occupation.' To the end both Nicholas and Kerensky failed to correct fatal weaknesses in their characters which were in part responsible for Russia's political calamities.

It would be a pity to overlook such telling flashes of character, and there are many of them scattered throughout this book, like so many complicated jigsaw pieces, which, if only they could all be found and fitted together, would help to clarify the pattern of the Russian Revolution.

Returning to the pictorial side of the eye-witness reports, we must admit ourselves fortunate with regard to the historical timing of the Revolution, which occurred recently enough for it to be recorded by modern techniques. There are many photographs of the highlights of the years 1905-17. A number of foreign newspapers maintained correspondents in Petrograd and the Russian Press, both Tsarist and Bolshevik, covered political events in full. Resources of this kind enable us to retouch the faded sepia image of events and render them more vivid.

The period treated in this book extends from the 'Bloody Sunday' of January 1905 to the murder of the Tsar in July 1918. The uprising of 1905 is taken as a starting point because it represented the first genuine mass movement in the cities and the villages. The violent end of the Royal Family in the summer of 1918 rang down the curtain on the Imperial past.

During the years of his exile between the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, Lenin said on more than one occasion that he did 'not expect to see the revolution'. But by fits and starts the *political* revolution he had envisaged for years eventually came into being in his lifetime. Yet he did not live to see the *social* and *economic* revolutions that he had planned in his mind's eye. He died in 1924, with Soviet Russia still staggering under the blow of prolonged civil war. It was left to Stalin, a personality who does not figure in these pages and who in fact took very little active part in the uprising of 1917, to carry out the 'Second Revolution', a programme far vaster in its scope than the political manoeuvres of 1917 and scarcely less dramatic.

The Western calendar, which is thirteen days ahead of the pre-revolutionary Russian one, is used throughout this book.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express here my gratitude to the following for their kind permission to quote extracts from these works: *The Story of My Life* by Georgy Gapon (1925), published by Chapman and Hall; *Memoirs of Lenin* by N. Krupskaia (1942), *Days with Lenin* by M. Gorky (1933), *Ten Days that Shook the World* by J. Reed (1960), published by Lawrence and Wishart, London, and Random House, New York; *Memoirs of a Terrorist* by B. Savinkov (1931), published by Albert and Charles Boni; *The Revolt of the Potemkin* by C. Feldman (1908), published by William Heinemann; *What I saw in Russia* by Maurice Baring (1913), published by Thomas Nelson; *The Secret Letters of Tsar Nicholas by Nicholas II* (1938), published by Nicholson and Watson; *My Russian Memoirs* by Sir Bernard Pares (1931), *Fateful Years* by S. Sazonov (1928), *Lost Splendour* by Prince F. Yusupov (1953), published by Jonathan Cape; *Letters of the Tsaritsa to the Tsar* (1923), published by Gerald Duckworth; *Fragments from My Diary* by M. Gorky (1924), published by Penguin Books, with special copyright permission from Baroness Budberg; *From the Red Archives* edited by C. Vulliamy (1929), published by Geoffrey Bles; *My Mission to Russia* by Sir George Buchanan (1923), published by Cassell and Company; *History of the Russian Revolution* by L. Trotsky (1933), published by Simon and Schuster; *The Russian Revolution 1917* by N. Sukhanov (1955), published by Oxford University Press; *Leaves from a Russian Diary* by P. Sorokin (1924), *An Ambassador's Memoirs* by M. Paléologue (1923), published by the Hutchinson Publishing Group; *Memoirs of the Russian Revolution* by A. Lukomsky (1922), published by Ernest Benn; *The Last Days of the Romanovs* by R. Wilton (1920), published by Thornton Butterworth; *The Catastrophe* by A. Kerensky (1927), published by the Meredith Press; *My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution* by M. Philips Price (1921), published by Allen and Unwin; *Memoirs of a British Agent* by Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart (1932), published by Putnam and Company; *From a Russian Diary*, Anon. (1921), published by John Murray; *One Hundred Red Days* by E. Sisson (1931), published by Yale University Press; *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1918* by J. Bunyan and H. Fisher with the permission of the publishers, Stanford University Press. Copyright 1934 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University; renewed 1962 by James Bunyan and H. Fisher; and *Documents of Russian History* edited by F. Golder (1927), published by Appleton-Century-Crofts.

I acknowledge with thanks permission to use photographs from the following sources: The Radio Times Hulton Picture Library for plates 1, 3, 4, 5, the Historisches Bildarchiv for plates 2 and 7 and Planet News for plate 6.

Finally I would like to thank Miss Shirley Baldwin and Mrs. Paul Cleary for helping me with the proof reading.

CHRONOLOGY

1905

- January 15th Russian forces cede Port Arthur to the Japanese.
January 22nd 'Bloody Sunday' in St. Petersburg.
February 17th Assassination of Grand Duke Sergius by a terrorist.
June 14th Mutiny on the *Potemkin* in the Black Sea.
September 5th Treaty of Portsmouth between the Russians and the Japanese.
October 20th Railwaymen's strike.
October 26th The first Soviet of Workers' Deputies set up in St. Petersburg.
October 30th Nicholas II grants a constitution.

1906

- May The First Duma.

1907

- The Second Duma. The Third Duma 1907-12.
April London Conference of the All-Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.

1911

- September 14th Stolypin, the Prime Minister, assassinated.

1912

- The Fourth Duma (until 1916).

1914

- August 1st War declared between Russia and Germany.

1915

- July 1st A combined Austro-German offensive closes pincers on Poland.
September 18th The Tsar takes over the high command of the army from Grand Duke Nicholas.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

1916

September 16th Protopopov appointed as Minister of the Interior through the influence of the Empress and Rasputin.

Dec. 29th-30th Rasputin murdered by Prince Yusupov.

1917

February 13th Strikes and meetings in factories in Petrograd.

February 28th 25,000 workers in Petrograd on strike.

March 7th-11th Strikes and demonstrations of increasing intensity in the working-class districts of Petrograd; more serious clashes with the police.

March 12th Tsarist régime overthrown in Petrograd: organization of the State Duma and the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

March 15th Establishment of the first Provisional Government; abdication of Nicholas II in favour of his brother Michael.

March 16th Abdication of Michael.

April 16th Lenin arrives at the Finland Station in Petrograd.

April 20th Publication of Lenin's Theses, calling for a campaign against the Provisional Government and the end of the war.

May 3rd-5th Demonstrations of soldiers and workers against the Provisional Government.

May 17th Trotsky arrives in Russia.

June 16th First Congress of Soviets opens in Petrograd.

July 1st Workers' processions and large demonstrations in Petrograd, with an increasing Bolshevik trend.

July 16th-18th Unsuccessful uprising of the Kronstadt sailors with Petrograd workers and soldiers against the Provisional Government. Lenin flees to Finland.

July 21st Organization of a new Cabinet under Kerensky.

CHRONOLOGY

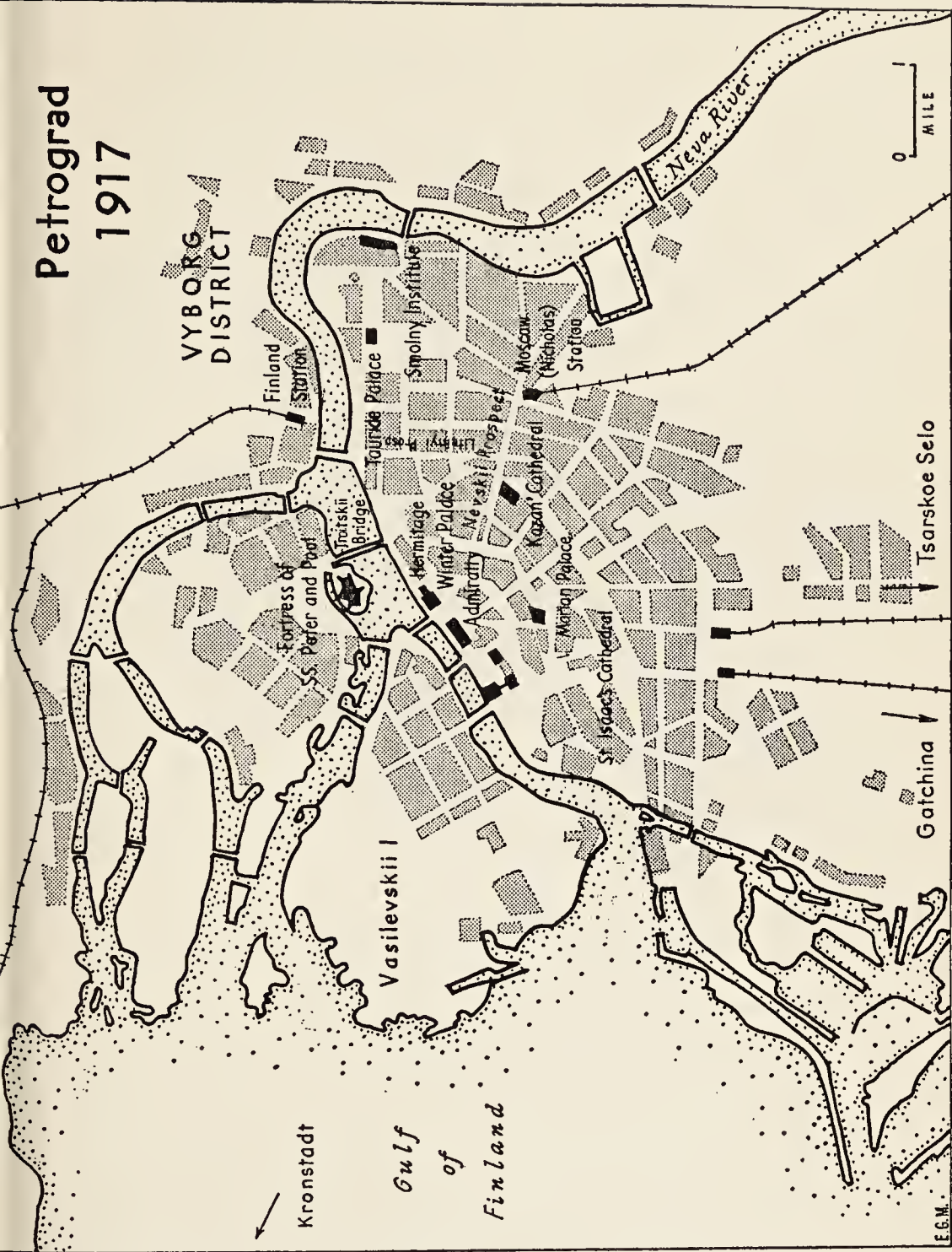
- Aug. 8th-16th Sixth Congress of Communist Party held in Petrograd modifies its programme.
- Aug. 25th-27th State Conference in Moscow, attended by all the political groups except the Bolsheviks. Final rift of right-wing and left-wing representatives. Moscow workers strike against the counter-revolutionary nature of the Conference.
- September 6th General Kornilov, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army, starts movement of troops on Petrograd with the aim of destroying the Soviet and reorganizing the Provisional Government.
- September 10th Owing to resistance by the Petrograd Soviet and workers, and the reluctance of Kornilov's troops to fight, the General's plans disintegrate.
- September 19th First Bolshevik majority in the Moscow Soviet.
- October 8th New coalition government including the Cadets.
- October 20th The Pre-Parliament opens in Petrograd.
- October 23rd Bolshevik Party Central Committee secretly decides to organize an armed revolt against the Provisional Government.
- November 7th Storming of the Winter Palace. Overthrow of the Provisional Government in Petrograd. Kerensky flees. Second Congress of Soviets with a Bolshevik majority opens in Petrograd.
- November 8th Government of People's Commissars established, consisting exclusively of Bolsheviks. Issues decrees nationalizing the land and offering peace negotiations to all the belligerent powers.
- November 9th Beginning of the struggle between the forces of the Provisional Government and the Soviet in Moscow. Kerensky moves on Petrograd.
- November 14th Flight of Kerensky.
- November 15th Bolsheviks triumph in Moscow.
- December 22nd Beginning of peace negotiations in Brest-Litovsk.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

1918

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| January 18th | Opening of the Constituent Assembly with an anti-Bolshevik majority. |
| January 19th | Constituent Assembly dispersed by the sailors and soldiers appointed to guard it. |
| March 3rd | Signature of the Peace of Brest-Litovsk. |
| July 16th | Nicholas and members of the Imperial Family shot in Ekaterinburg. |

Petrograd 1917



CHAPTER I

1905

Mirsky, an outstanding Russian writer of the old régime, represented the history of his country since the beginning of the nineteenth century as a succession of revolutionary waves and inter-revolutionary troughs.

'Each of these waves rose higher than the one that preceded it. The first wave broke in 1825, in the entirely unsupported and unsuccessful mutiny of the Decembrists. It was followed by the long reaction of the reign of Nicholas I, during which the second wave rose. Gradually and slowly developing, it was at once held back and powerfully seconded by the liberal reforms of the sixties, reached its climax in the activity of the People's Will Party, and broke in 1881 in the assassination of Alexander II. The succeeding calm was neither so long nor so complete as that which preceded it. The Revolution gained strength by the nineties, rose to an unprecedented height, and broke with a terrible crash in 1905. The movement was again suppressed, only to reappear during the First World War and finally to triumph in 1917.'

The revolution of 1905 was touched off by three incendiary causes, one of them dating from a long way back in the nineteenth century, the other two of more recent origin.

Agitation for political reform reached a new intensity after the turn of the century, although it had been seething since the 1820s. On the one hand the liberal elements of the population stepped up their demand for changes; professional men in the cities, teachers in the universities and country gentlemen, who together had formed the backbone of earlier campaigns, were now supported by rich men of affairs. On the other hand, remonstrances of this kind were translated into violent action by Socialist Revolutionary terrorists and impatient students who

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

were sick of seeing their professors' reasonable demands being constantly turned down by the government. Assassinations and attempted assassinations snowballed in number towards 1905.

The aims of the revolutionary parties struck a new chord of response among the growing factory population at this time. Brought into being by the fast progress of Russian industry in the 1890s, the working masses were at once submitted to the rigours of a period of economic depression. In their distress they paid more attention to the political scene. Thus when widespread strikes occurred in 1903, political as well as economic grievances were aired, and substantial demonstrations were organized in public places. Russians of this class and persuasion were to make up the nucleus of the Soviet proletariat after the revolution of 1917.

The third fuse leading directly to the events of January 1905 had to do with the conduct of the Russo-Japanese war, initiated by the Russian Government in February 1904 in order to distract the public at home from its growing preoccupation with the need for reform. After entering into hostilities with an overweening confidence in their own superiority, the Russian forces met with a weary succession of defeats on land and at sea. The fall of Port Arthur on January 15, 1905, came precisely one week before the major revolutionary upheaval of the year, 'Bloody Sunday' in St. Petersburg.

Like the revolution of 1917, that of January 1905 broke out in the capital city and was partly the result of a badly conducted war effort; it also received the support of many and varied sectors of public opinion. But at this point the resemblance ceases. The series of upheavals which continued throughout 1905 did not produce any leaders of note from any class or hue of political thought. In 1905 Kerensky was still a private person: he only became a member of the government in 1912 with the formation of the Fourth Duma. Lenin was in exile in Geneva, writing revolutionary pamphlets but as yet taking no action.

On January 22, 1905, a huge procession of protest wound its way through the streets of St. Petersburg and headed towards the Winter Palace with the aim of presenting a petition to Nicholas II. It consisted of workers and their families, brought together through the efforts of a priest called Georgi Gapon. He had built up an organization in the factories which claimed to represent

the voice of the people: each member of his association stood for a thousand others of the same class. The movement had the sympathy of some of the liberals, since it was peaceful in intent. Middle-class intellectuals helped to draft the petition carried through the streets of the city on that eventful day. Gapon prepared the Tsar for what was to come by writing to him as follows on the previous day:

Sire!

Do not believe the Ministers. They are cheating Thee in regard to the real state of affairs. The people believe in Thee. They have made up their minds to gather at the Winter Palace tomorrow at 2 p.m. to lay their needs before Thee. . . . Do not fear anything. Stand tomorrow before the party and accept our humblest petition. I, the representative of the workingmen, and my comrades, guarantee the inviolability of Thy person.

GAPON

The actual petition started off in this vein:

Lord. We workers, our children, our wives and our old, helpless parents have come, Lord, to seek truth and protection from you. We are impoverished and oppressed, unbearable work is imposed on us, we are despised and not recognized as human beings. We are treated as slaves, who must bear their fate and be silent. We have suffered terrible things, but we are pressed ever deeper into the abyss of poverty, ignorance and lack of rights. Despotism and arbitrariness throttle us and we choke. We have no more strength, O Lord. The limit of patience is here; for us that terrible moment has come when death is better than the continuance of the most unbearable torments.

Singing religious and patriotic songs, the masses under Gapon's leadership approached the Winter Palace. If Gapon had known the outcome of the adventure, he would surely have turned back or ordered the crowd to disperse. In 1905 he was a young man of thirty-two. Good-looking and a powerful speaker, he had been swept by the tide of history and his own naïve belief in the power of persuasion, unsupported by force or influence, as a means of reforming the ills of Russia. He appeared so harmless to the Tsarist police that they looked benevolently upon him until the events of 'Bloody Sunday'.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Gapon has left us his account of that day. We must imagine him striding radiant through the streets of St Petersburg, a young priest ready for martyrdom, an early twentieth-century Gandhi, his handsome ascetic face whipped by the Russian cold, his black beard flowing in the icy wind.

'Shall we go straight toward the gate, or by a roundabout route to avoid the soldiers?' I was asked. I shouted huskily, 'No; straight through them. Courage! Death or Freedom!' and the crowd shouted in return, 'Hurrah!' We then started forward, singing in one mighty, solemn voice the Tsar's hymn, 'God Save thy People'. But when we came to the line, 'Save Nicholas Alexandrovitch', some of the men who belonged to the Socialist Party were wicked enough to substitute the words 'Save George Appolonovich' [Gapon], while others simply repeated the words, 'Death or Freedom!' The procession moved in a compact mass. In front of me were my two bodyguards and a young fellow with dark eyes from whose face his hard labouring life had not yet wiped away the light of youthful gaiety. On the flanks of the crowd ran the children. Some of the women insisted on walking in the first rows, in order, as they said, to protect me with their bodies, and force had to be used to remove them. I may mention also as a significant fact that at the start the police not only did not interfere with the procession, but moved with us with bared heads in recognition of the religious emblems. Two local police officers marched bareheaded in front of us, preventing any hindrance to our advance and forcing a few carriages that we met to turn aside in our favour. In this way we approached the Narva Gate, the crowd becoming denser as we progressed, the singing more impressive, and the whole scene more dramatic.

At last we reached within two hundred paces of where the troops stood. Files of infantry barred the road, and in front of them a company of cavalry was drawn up, with their swords shining in the sun. Would they dare to touch us? For a moment we trembled, and then started forward again.

Suddenly the company of Cossacks galloped rapidly towards us with drawn swords. So, then, it was to be a massacre after all! There was no time for consideration, for making plans, or giving orders. A cry of alarm arose as the Cossacks came down upon us. Our front ranks broke before them, opening to right and left,

and down this lane the soldiers drove their horses, striking on both sides. I saw the swords lifted and falling, the men, women and children dropping to the earth like logs of wood, while moans, curses and shouts filled the air. It was impossible to reason in the fever of this crisis. At my order the front rows formed again in the wake of the Cossacks, who penetrated farther and farther, and at last emerged from the end of the procession.

Again we started forward, with solemn resolution and rising rage in our hearts. The Cossacks turned their horses and began to cut their way through the crowd from the rear. They passed through the whole column and galloped back towards the Narva Gate, where—the infantry having opened their ranks and let them through—they again formed line. We were still advancing, though the bayonets raised in threatening rows seemed to point symbolically to our fate. A spasm of pity filled my heart, but I felt no fear. Before we started, my dear friend, the workman K——, had said to me, ‘We are going to give your life as a sacrifice.’ So be it!

We were not more than thirty yards from the soldiers, being separated from them only by the bridge over the Tarakanovskii Canal, which here marks the border of the city, when suddenly, without any warning and without a moment’s delay, was heard the dry crack of many rifle-shots. I was informed later on that a bugle was blown, but we could not hear it above the singing, and even if we had heard it we should not have known what it meant.

Vasiliev, with whom I was walking hand in hand, suddenly left hold of my arm and sank upon the snow. One of the workmen who carried the banners fell also. Immediately one of the two police officers to whom I had referred shouted out, ‘What are you doing? How dare you fire upon the portrait of the Tsar?’ This, of course, had no effect, and both he and the other officer were shot down—as I learned afterwards, one was killed and the other dangerously wounded.

I turned rapidly to the crowd and shouted to them to lie down, and I also stretched myself out upon the ground. As we lay thus another volley was fired, and another, and yet another, till it seemed as though the shooting was continuous. The crowd first kneeled and then lay flat down, hiding their heads from the rain of bullets, while the rear rows of the procession began to

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

run away. The smoke of the fire lay before us like a thin cloud, and I felt it stiflingly in my throat. An old man named Lavrentiev, who was carrying the Tsar's portrait, had been one of the first victims. Another old man caught the portrait as it fell from his hands and carried it till he too was killed by the next volley. With his last gasp the old man said, 'I may die, but I will see the Tsar.' One of the banner-carriers had his arm broken by a bullet. A little boy of ten years, who was carrying a church lantern, fell pierced by a bullet, but still held the lantern tightly and tried to rise again, when another shot struck him down. Both the smiths who had guarded me were killed, as well as all those who were carrying the ikons and banners; and all these emblems now lay scattered on the snow. The soldiers were actually shooting into the courtyards of the adjoining houses, where the crowd tried to find refuge and, as I learned afterwards, bullets even struck persons inside, through the windows.

At last the firing ceased. I stood up with a few others who remained uninjured and looked down at the bodies that lay prostrate around me. I cried to them, 'Stand up!' But they lay still. I could not at first understand. Why did they lie there? I looked again, and saw that their arms were stretched out lifelessly, and I saw the scarlet stain of blood upon the snow. Then I understood. It was horrible. And my Vasiliev lay dead at my feet.

Horror crept into my heart. The thought flashed through my mind, 'And this is the work of our Little Father, the Tsar.' Perhaps this anger saved me, for now I knew in very truth that a new chapter was opened in the book of the history of our people. I stood up, and a little group of workmen gathered round me again. Looking backward, I saw that our line, though still stretching away into the distance, was broken and that many of the people were fleeing. It was in vain that I called to them, and in a moment I stood there, the centre of a few scores of men, trembling with indignation amid the broken ruins of our movement.

Again we started, and again the firing began. After the last volley I rose again and found myself alone but still unhurt.

Suddenly, in the midst of my despair, somebody took hold of my arm and dragged me rapidly away into a small side street a few paces from the scene of the massacre. It was idle for me to protest. What more could be done? 'There is no longer any Tsar for us!' I exclaimed.

I gave myself unwillingly into the hands of my rescuers. All those who remained of us, save this handful, were shot down or dispersed in terror. We had gone unarmed. There was nothing left but to live for a day when the guilty would be punished and this great wrong would be righted—a day when, if we came again unarmed, it would only be because arms were no longer necessary.

In the by-street we were approached immediately by three or four of my workmen, and I recognized in my rescuer the engineer who had seen me on the previous night at the Narvskaja Zastava. He took out from his pocket a pair of scissors and cut off my priest's hair, which the men immediately divided between themselves. One of them rapidly tore off my cassock and hat, and gave me instead his own overcoat; but this appeared to be smeared with blood. Then another poor fellow took off his own ragged coat and cap, and insisted on my wearing them. It was all done in two or three minutes. The engineer urged that I should go with him to the house of a friend, and I decided to do so.

In the meantime the soldiers stood in possession of the field of the massacre. For some time they did not themselves attend to the killed and wounded, and they did not allow anyone else to do so. Only after a long interval did they begin to pile the bodies on a number of sledges, and to remove them for burial or for hospital treatment. The wounds, according to the statements of the doctors, were, in an overwhelming majority of cases, of a very severe character, and were in the head or body, seldom in the limbs. Some of those shot had several bullet wounds, and on not one of the bodies was found any arms, not even a stone in the pocket. One doctor of a local hospital, to which thirty-four corpses were taken, said that the sight was a sickening one, the faces being contorted with horror and suffering, and the floor covered with pools of blood.

Fleeing from Russia after the events of 'Bloody Sunday', Gapon arrived in Geneva and met Lenin. Lenin's wife, Krupskaja, recorded the meeting in her memoirs.

Soon Gapon arrived in Geneva. First he got in touch with the Socialist Revolutionaries, who tried to picture things as though Gapon was 'their' man, and in fact the entire Petersburg workers' movement was their handiwork. They boosted Gapon

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

tremendously, and eulogized him. At that time Gapon was the centre of general attention, and the English *Times* paid him fabulous sums for contributions. A short time after Gapon arrived in Geneva a Socialist Revolutionary lady came round to us and informed Vladimir Il'ich that Gapon wished to see him. A rendezvous was arranged in a café on 'neutral' ground. Evening came. Il'ich did not light the lamp in his room, but kept pacing up and down.

Gapon was a living part of the Revolution that was sweeping Russia. He was closely bound up with the working masses, who devotedly believed in him, and Il'ich was agitated about this meeting.

A comrade recently asked with consternation: how could Il'ich ever have anything to do with Gapon?

Of course, one could simply have ignored Gapon, reckoning in advance that nothing good will ever come from a priest. That is what Plekhanov did, for instance, receiving Gapon extremely coolly. But Il'ich's strength lay precisely in the fact that for him the Revolution was a live thing, he was capable of discerning its features, grasping all its manifold details, knowing and understanding what the masses wanted. And knowledge of the masses can only be obtained by close contact with them. How could Il'ich pass by Gapon, who stood close to the masses, and had such influence over them!

On returning from his meeting with Gapon, Vladimir Il'ich related his impressions. Gapon was then still wreathed in the spirit of the Revolution. In speaking of the Petersburg workers he completely flared up, seethed with indignation and revulsion against the Tsar and his agents. This revulsion was very naïve, but it was all the more direct. It was in assonance with the indignation of the working masses. 'Only we'll have to teach him,' said Vladimir Il'ich. 'I said to him, "Don't you listen to flattery, little father; study, or that's where you'll find yourself"—and I pointed under the table.'

On February 8th, Vladimir Il'ich wrote in No. 7 of *Vpered*: 'We hope George Gapon, who has experienced and felt so profoundly the transition from the opinions of a politically unconscious people to revolutionary views, will succeed in working to obtain that clarity of revolutionary outlook necessary for a political leader.'

The foolish and cruel treatment of the workers in St. Petersburg on January 22nd only served to increase political unrest in Russia. Protests against the behaviour of the Government and the Tsar mounted higher, and the whole of 1905 was marked by strikes throughout the industrial centres in the country. In February Grand Duke Sergius, the husband of the Empress's sister, uncle to Nicholas and commander of the troops in Moscow, was assassinated by a Socialist Revolutionary terrorist, Kaliaiev.

Boris Savinkov, a fellow conspirator, poet and novelist, describes the scene, quoting from one of Kaliaiev's letters and from Revolutionary Russia:

After bidding me goodbye, Kaliaiev, as had been agreed, walked over to the Chapel of the Iverskaia Madonna. He had long noticed that at the corner, in a glass frame, hung a coloured patriotic picture. The road from the Nikolsky gate to the chapel was clearly reflected in the glass. In this manner, standing with one's back to the Kremlin and looking at the picture, it was possible to observe the Grand Duke's departure from the palace. In accordance with our understanding, Kaliaiev, dressed in peasant clothes, as on February 2nd, was to move from this point toward the Grand Duke in the Kremlin after observing his departure from the palace. Through the glass he apparently observed what I had noted from my vantage point, i.e., the arrival of the carriage at the palace entrance with Rudinkin on the coach box. Carefully calculating the time at his disposal he returned to the Iverskaia and walked back past the Museum of History through the Nikolskii gate to the court house. Here he met the Grand Duke.

'Despite all my precautions to the contrary,' he writes in one of his letters to the comrades, 'I remained alive February 4th, I hurled my bomb from a distance of four paces, not more, striking as I dashed forward, quite close to my object. I was caught up by the storm of the explosion and saw how the carriage was torn to fragments. When the cloud had lifted I found myself standing before the remains of the back wheels. I remember the smell of smoke. Splinters struck my face, tearing off my cap. I did not fall but merely turned my face away. Then, about five feet away, near the gate, I saw bits of the Grand Duke's clothing and his nude body. About ten feet behind the Grand Duke's carriage lay

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

my cap. I walked over, picked it up and put it on. I looked around. My overcoat was seared, dotted with pieces of wood, and torn. Blood was streaming from my face, and I realized there would be no escape for me, although there were a few moments when no one was around. I walked away. Suddenly from behind, I heard cries, "Hold him, hold him." I was overtaken by police agents in a sleigh and someone's hands were upon me. I did not resist. Around me were buzzing a policeman, a police lieutenant and a disgusting looking spy. "Frisk him. He may have a revolver. Ah, thank God, I was not killed." "We were right here, too," said the spy, trembling. I was sorry I could not pump a bullet into this coward. "Don't hang on to me. I won't run away. I have done my work." (I realized now that I was deafened.) We drove in a cab through the Kremlin, as I shouted: "Down with the accursed Tsar, long live liberty! Down with the accursed Government, long live the Party of Socialists-Revolutionists!" I was taken to a police station. I mounted the stairway with firm steps. It was nauseating to be among these miserable little cowards. I was brazen. I laughed at them. I was transferred to the Yakimansky house of detention. I fell into a sound sleep.'

Revolutionary Russia devoted an article to the event of February 4th. An eye-witness described the event itself as follows:

'The explosion of the bomb occurred at about two-forty-five. It was heard in distant parts of Moscow. The confusion was particularly marked in the court house. The courts were in session and all the offices were at work when the explosion came. Many thought it was an earthquake, others that the court house was collapsing. All the windows in the building were shattered. Judges and court clerks were hurled from their seats. Ten minutes later, when they recovered from the shock and realized what had taken place, many dashed from the court house to the place of the explosion. On the spot of execution lay a formless mass, about eight to ten inches high, consisting of little fragments of the carriage, clothing and the mutilated body. A crowd of about thirty, who were among the early comers, was examining the evidences of destruction. Some tried to remove the body from the debris. It was a terrible sight. The head was gone. Only one hand and part of a leg could be identified. At this moment Elizabeth Feodorovna, in fur coat but without hat, rushed out of the palace

toward the formless mass. All had their hats on. The Grand Duchess noticed this. She ran from one man to another, shouting: "Are you not ashamed to be staring here, go away." Her footman asked the crowd to take off their hats, but no one would do so, and all refused to move.'

Kaliaiev's speech at his trial was one of the most inspired indictments of Tsarist rule in Russia.

'First of all, permit me to make a correction of fact: I am not a defendant here, I am your prisoner. We are two warring camps. You—the representatives of the Imperial Government, the hired servants of capital and oppression. I—one of the avengers of the people, a socialist and revolutionist. Mountains of corpses divide us, hundreds of thousands of broken human lives and a whole sea of blood and tears covering the country in torrents of horror and resentment. You have declared war upon the people. We have accepted your challenge. Having taken me prisoner, it is now within your power to subject me to the torture of slow extinction or to kill me outright, but you cannot hold trial over me. No matter how much you may seek to exercise your sway, there can be no justification for you as there can be no condemnation of me. Between you and me there can be no reconciliation, as it cannot be between absolutism and the people. We are still the same enemies, and if, having deprived me of liberty and the opportunity to speak directly to the people, you have seen fit to institute this solemn judgment upon me, I am in no way obliged to recognize you as my judges. Let not the law, draped in senatorial toga, be our judge, in the presence of these hand-picked representatives of the ruling class and in this atmosphere of armed vileness. Let the conscience of the people, free and untrammelled, be our judge. Let us be tried by this great martyr of history—the Russia of the people.

'I killed the Grand Duke, a member of the imperial family, and it would not be incomprehensible were I to be tried by a family court of the ruling house, as an open enemy of the dynasty. That would be crude and barbarous in this twentieth century. But, at least, it would be frank. But where is the Pilate who, not having yet washed the blood of the people from his hands, has sent you here to build the gallows? Or, perhaps,

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

conscious of the power vested in you, you have mustered the brazenness to try me here in his behalf, in the name of hypocritical law? Know, then, that I recognize neither you nor your law. I do not recognize the centralized institutions of government, in which political hypocrisy conceals the moral cowardice of the rulers, and cruel vengeance is imposed for the sake of oppression in the name of outraged human conscience.

‘But where is your conscience? Where is the frontier between the duty you are paid to perform and any convictions you may have, however opposed to mine? For you dare to sit in judgment not only upon what I have done, but also upon its moral significance. You do not term the affair of February 4th an act of killing. You call it a crime, a misdeed. You dare not only to try me, but to pass judgment. What gives you the right to do so? Is it not true, my pious grandees, that you have killed no one, and that you support yourselves not only on bayonets and the law, but also upon arguments of morality? Like a certain savant of the time of Napoleon III, you are quite ready to admit that there are two standards of morality: one for plain mortals, which says “do not kill”, “do not steal”, and another for political rulers, to whom everything is permitted. And you are really convinced that you are above law and that there can be no judgment upon you.’

Kaliaiev was no coward. He gave himself up after the assassination and defended his ideals with vigour during his trial. He refused to express repentance for his act, although Grand Duchess Elizabeth, the widow of the murdered man, visited him in prison and strove to have him released if only he would repent. Kaliaiev realized that his execution would do more than his own survival to further the cause for which he had risked his life.

The most alarming occurrence in 1905 after ‘Bloody Sunday’ took place in the distant Black Sea. On June 14th mutiny broke out on one of the biggest ships of the Black Sea Fleet, the cruiser *Potemkin*. The sailors refused to eat rotting meat. The officers ordered the ringleaders to be shot, but they were not obeyed. The commander of the *Potemkin* and some of the officers were thrown into the sea, the red flag was hoisted, and the rebel sailors brought the ship into Odessa. The Government authori-

ties feared that the rest of the Black Sea Fleet would go over to the side of the mutineers. Their anxiety was sharpened further by the fact that a workers' strike was going on in Odessa at the same time.

A young student at the University of Odessa, by the name of Constantine Feldmann, was involved in the strike as one of the leaders of the large Social Democratic cell in the city. At the height of the strike he heard of the arrival of the Potemkin.

At ten o'clock in the morning I went out into the street, and walked towards the Nikolaevskii Boulevard.

An immense and handsome flight of steps connects the latter with the port of Odessa. The magnificent view over the open sea and the bay of Odessa makes the boulevard the favourite promenade of the aristocratic public. Elegant ladies lounge away the day in its shady avenues; rich, gaily-dressed people drive up and down with trotting thoroughbreds on the smooth asphalt road. This sort of idleness, of frivolous gaiety and mirth, forms a striking contrast to the port lying below it.

Clouds of coal-dust, the shrill whistles of tugs and the deep notes of steamer sirens, the rumble of hurrying carts, the roar of thousands of human voices, are all about us as we descend into that centre of exploited labour. Here we see not smartly dressed ladies, but barefoot men in dirt and rags; here we hear not the gay strains of the boulevard orchestra, but the unceasing roar of triumphant Capital.

That day the scene of action was to be shifted to the town itself, and all the Labour agitators had received orders to be in the central streets. I was setting off, therefore, to a Liberal of my acquaintance, with whom I had left my student's uniform overnight.

It was with no cheerful feelings that I walked through the town; we were living through tremendous events, and we were not equal to dealing with them; the masses were ready for battle; we could not lead them, for we had no weapons. The strike could not be prolonged on pacific lines: it had reached its logical end. It had stirred and excited the whole working population of Odessa, it had aroused the peasant movement in the surrounding districts, had shaken the administrative machinery of the Odessa bureaucracy, and had led the troops to sympathize with the

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

people. Now it must either pass into an armed insurrection or—cease.

For the former alternative, arms, in small quantity at least, were essential. We had none. . . . And our hands dropped powerless before this blank wall.

We resolved to do our utmost that day to prolong the strike, to lead the workmen on. But to what? The whole tragedy of our position lay in the fact that we could find no answer to that question. What had we to tell the people that day? Call them on to battle? But all these days they had been giving one answer to our appeals: 'We are ready; give us arms and lead us. . . .' Again the same blank wall, and the movement coming up against it must stop short. I pictured to myself the depression I should find already in the ranks of my comrades, and the drooping of the warlike spirit of the previous day.

But I found no justification for my gloomy reflections in the streets; far from being deserted, the street was full of a vast, eager crowd moving rapidly in the direction in which I was going myself. The crowd grew denser and denser as I got nearer the Nikolaevskii Boulevard, and similar crowds came streaming from all the adjoining streets. That peculiar hum, always heard in a crowd that is learning of something new and unexpected, hovered over the street.

I was surprised at this excitement, but my ragged workman's clothes were likely to attract the attention of the police in that aristocratic quarter, so I did not feel free to stand still and inquire into the state of mind of the crowd. I simply quickened my pace. I soon reached my friend's house, and successfully slipping by that Russian Cerberus, the *dvornik*, I ran up the stairs to his flat. Here the inexplicable excitement of the crowd was at once explained to me.

I had scarcely got through the tedious process of changing my clothes, when my good-natured acquaintance ran in and informed me that an ironclad had steamed into the port, the crew of which had mutinied and killed their officers, and were now resolved to throw in their lot with the people.

This was such great and startling news that I did not dare believe it. I ran out into the street to convince myself of its truth.

The sea stretched in its vast immensity before me, and on its

Titanic bosom proudly floated another mighty colossus—a battleship with the red flag fluttering over it.

I stood in dumb, awestruck ecstasy before this marvellous apparition. . . . But there was no standing still for long—one must hurry down to it; the work that had been begun must be finished, the great battle must be fought at last. . . . And with the joyful feeling of a soldier, who at the very moment of retreat suddenly sees powerful and unexpected reinforcements approaching, I rushed down to the port.

With me ran a crowd as joyful as I was. The farther I went the denser it became. The breath of freedom was already floating over it; it transformed men's countenances, and instead of the furious hate I had seen yesterday, an expression of clutching, trembling ecstasy was on all their faces. Shouts of 'Down with Autocracy!' 'Hurrah for Freedom!' rose all round, and today they were not followed by the clatter of the Cossacks' horses and the angry cries of the trampled crowd.

At last I reached a tent in which lay the body of a dead sailor. An immense crowd had gathered round it, and it was difficult to squeeze one's way through. But the masses were looking for leaders, who would tell them what to do, would give them new watchwords, and would lead them out of their uncertain position. And so as soon as they saw I was a student they let me pass through into the tent.

In the middle of the tent lay the dead man. His face was full of a marvellous peace and radiance. On his breast was the following inscription: 'Men of Odessa! Before you lies the body of Grigory Vakulintchuk, a sailor savagely killed by the senior officer of the ironclad *Prince Potemkin* for saying "The Soup is not good." Let us make the sign of the cross and say, "Peace to his ashes." Let us avenge ourselves on the bloodthirsty vampires! Death to the oppressors! Death to the blood-suckers! And hurrah for freedom!

'Crew of the squadron flagship *Prince Potemkin*: "One for all, all for one!"'

I went out of the tent, and learned in rough outline the history of the mutiny. The crew had mutinied on account of the meat served them, had killed their officers, and come to Odessa to join the workmen. The sailors had routed the Cossacks and the police, and were now taking in coal and provisions.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

A picture of our whole position rose vividly before me: the authorities amazed and thrown into confusion—the soldiers few in number, and not to be relied upon. They had already refused to fire upon the people, and would certainly not fire on the sailors. On the other side, the heightened spirit of the workmen—organization—immense fighting forces. The sailors must at once be induced to land, to join the workmen, to take the town, and set up a republic in Odessa; then to create out of the workmen a revolutionary army, and to march on, gradually extending the field of the insurrection, and fortifying one position after another for the revolution. All haste must be made to the ironclad to begin the agitation; there was no time to wait for authorization from the party, and I resolved to act on my own responsibility.

The workmen, to whom I said that I was a representative of the Social Democratic organization, at once procured me a boat, and I was rowed to the ship. At the same time an immense coal-barge was towed out of the harbour by a torpedo-boat. Thousands of heads could be seen on it, and the strains of the 'Varshavianka' floated from it. Every moment the crowd from the shore responded with a mighty 'Hurrah!' A military cutter came smoothly and swiftly through the water to meet me.

'Where are you going?' they shouted to me from it.

'To the free revolutionist ship,' I answered.

'And who may you be—a Social Democrat?'

'Yes.'

'And what proof have you to show?'

'Social Democrats don't have passports to show; they let us go to rot in Siberia and prison without them.'

'Well, get in with us.'

I got on to the capstan and began to speak. First of all I reminded the sailors that they had already crossed the line beyond which there was no hoping for pardon. They had burnt their boats; the Rubicon was crossed. There could be no reconciliation with Tsarism now. Only the victory of one side and the complete annihilation of the other could settle the matter, so it must be war to the bitter end. We must unite with the strongest allies; we must deal the enemy a deadly blow. The troops in Odessa were ready to come over to us; they were only waiting for the first step. This step the sailors must take. While the enemy was still in confusion, before he had gathered his forces together, we must

deal a decisive blow. Every minute he was growing stronger and drawing in fresh reinforcements. The first panic was passing over, and with it the chance of overwhelming the enemy by one determined blow would pass away. Every moment of delay was strengthening the enemy and weakening us. Hence the conclusion: we must proceed to resolute action at once. And then I acquainted the sailors with the plan we had elaborated.

And during all this speech I asked the sailors after every statement whether they agreed with it. 'True,' rang out every time. When I finished speaking, my voice was drowned in a deafening 'Hurrah!' It seemed as though the thing was done, and we had only to pass a definite resolution in accordance with the general feeling. But suddenly I heard the phrase: 'Fire on the town we can't!'

Someone took it up; then several voices chimed in, and soon a considerable proportion of the crew were shouting that we couldn't fire on the town.

Kirill came up to me and said: 'You went to work too abruptly; it can't be done like that.'

I saw myself now that I had been injudicious in telling them straight out of the plan. That ought to have been left to one of the sailors. The feeling of the mistake I had made reduced me to despair. When such a matter was in the balance, to risk failure was almost a crime.

While I was fuming inwardly, the crew were in violent excitement, divided into two parties, one insisting on the immediate bombardment of the town, the other protesting against it. And the latter was beginning to get the upper hand. Cries were even heard of 'Away with the landmen!' 'Let the officers have their say!'

All eyes were turned on Alekseev, but he was silent. He was silent in spite of the fact that his word might have given the victory to his party. He was silent because his feeble spirit was afraid to face the conflict of passions.

At that moment Matushenko sprang on the capstan. His appearance silenced the shouts of wrangling at once.

'Stay, brothers,' he began; 'here I see quarrels have arisen among us. Things have come to such a pass with us that one half of the crew is turning against the other. We must have unity, and here it is coming to sailors taking up their rifles and killing

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

one another. No, lads, you can't do so! Our rulers have done enough setting us against each other, and now you want to fall to killing of yourselves. The whole people is looking to you now; it is looking for you as its deliverers, and here you are quarrelling among yourselves.'

And his words flowed on, full of simple eloquence and pity for the oppressed, long-suffering people. It was the tribune of the people speaking now, pouring out in simple words the people's suffering, the pent-up woe of a thousand years.

And at these words the hearts of all were brimming over with anger and hatred for the oppressors of long ages. Soon it was no longer the tribune of the people, but the sailor, who spoke with full understanding of the psychology of his comrades.

'Here there are three hundred of us Social Democrats on the ship. We have resolved to lay down our lives for the cause of the people, and to fight for it to the last drop of our blood. If you don't want to fire, we will go to the guns ourselves and send our threatening bombs at the Tsar. And you, if you want to, join us, or else take your rifles and shoot us all down; or else bind us and hand us over to the authorities. They will welcome you with music, reward you with decorations. . . .'

'No, we won't have that!' the crew roared, suddenly roused by this picture.

'Now, then, do you agree to fire on the town?'

'We agree!' shouted the sailors; and now not one voice dared interpose a protest in this outburst of united feeling in the mass.

'Maybe someone does not agree, but his voice is not heard,' Matushenko went on relentlessly, 'so let us do this: those who are for firing go to the right, and those against, to the left.'

The whole crew moved to the right.

'There, you see what mean souls there are among you? They'll stir the crew up behind one's back, so as not to be seen, but are afraid to give their opinion openly.'

The 'conductors' were abashed.

'Well, brothers, now stand steady. Get to your places.'

The crew dispersed about the ship with renewed energy, and began to make ready for action. The machinists ran to the machinery department, the marine gunners ran to clean the guns, the rest of the sailors fell to clearing the decks. The medical

staff got the ambulance and first-aid appliances in readiness. The doctor made the *Viekha* ready as an ambulance.

Before the meeting we had sent twelve sailors to the town for the funeral. Now voices were raised protesting against firing before our men had returned, for fear of killing them. This most reasonable consideration was, however, overlooked in the general confusion.

It was five o'clock in the evening when the battle alarm sounded. I had never been on a man-of-war during manoeuvres, and was now impressed by the discipline and rapidity with which everything was done.

The bugle sounded. The sailors standing near me ran off, and the exposed parts of the ship were suddenly left empty; while men were running with extraordinary swiftness about the ladders and the spar-deck. Within three minutes all was quiet, the big guns were loaded, and the gunners were standing at each gun. The approaches to the admiral's stateroom were closed by iron hatchways, and it was some time before I could realize where I was. A moment before the stairs to the admiral's room had been here, and now they were gone. . . . All of a sudden my feet were drenched with cold water; the hoses were left running that the wooden floor of the deck might not catch fire from the shells. I beat a hasty retreat into the inner part of the ship. Here, too, I was struck by the marvellous order. Everyone stood at his post, and there was not one sailor to be seen unoccupied.

Pointing out the theatre to the signalman, I made my way to the bridge, from which they were keeping a watch on the town with a telescope. There I found Kovalenko and a sailor I will call Z., who told me they were going to fire from the six-inch guns.

Then we heard the signal sounded, and the boom of the first blank shot. Then a second and a third. The first shell was to follow a quarter of an hour later.

A feeling of terror and of joy clutched at my heart in these moments. We had advanced at last to action. Who could tell what was before us? And if our shells were to fall not on the theatre, but on the houses of peaceable citizens and, instead of happiness, we were bringing desolation and destruction on the people? . . . And awful pictures rose before my mind. . . . But soon they passed, and I saw instead the picture of the people's revolution. Behind the smoke of the shot, just floating out, I

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

seemed to see the red battalions of the army of the Revolution, marching victoriously, ever farther and farther into the heart of Russia. Behind the crash of the first shell I seemed to hear the triumph and rejoicing of the conquering people.

The bugle sounded. All was quiet. Then a flash of bright light followed by a deafening roar—the echo went on sounding long after it. Again a hush, interrupted by the harsh shout, ‘Overshot!’ from the signalman standing beside me. Before our minds rose the picture of women and children buried under the fragments of the bursting shell.

But now again we heard the signal; and after it the deafening roar, and again the same earsplitting shout of the signalman, ‘Overshot!’

Our shells had missed their mark; the hands of the Tsar’s servant, the base traitor, had turned them from the enemies of the people.

Young Feldmann felt sure that the combination of the strike in Odessa and the mutiny on board the *Potemkin* would lead to a nationwide revolution. Gapon’s demonstration in St. Petersburg had promoted ideals without force: now both qualities were present in sufficient array to alarm the Government authorities to an unprecedented degree. But the hour was still premature, and no leader was forthcoming. The *Potemkin* sailors soon lapsed into uncertainty about what to do after shelling Odessa, and eventually sailed off to Rumania and gave themselves up to the police there. Feldmann stayed on the *Potemkin* until the end. After a period of imprisonment, he managed to escape and reach Austria without being taken.

The political climate in Russia steadily deteriorated as the year went by. At the end of August an ignominious peace was concluded with Japan by the Treaty of Portsmouth. This was the work of Witte, who had been a Minister under Alexander III and Nicholas, but who had resigned in protest over the question of the war with Japan, which he rightly considered to be disastrous.

In the autumn a nationwide strike of the railwaymen led to a general strike which paralyzed the country. Witte used the desperate situation as an opportunity to present the Tsar with a memorandum in which he suggested two alternatives—a military

dictatorship or a liberal constitution. After initial hesitation, for he thought he was betraying his coronation oath to rule the country, Nicholas agreed to a constitution in the October Manifesto. His letters to his mother at the time showed his reluctance.

November 1st:

You remember, no doubt, those January days when we were together at Tsarskoe—they were miserable, weren't they? But they are nothing in comparison with what has happened now. . . . All sorts of conferences took place in Moscow. . . . God knows what happened in the universities. Every kind of ruffian walked in from the streets, riot was loudly proclaimed—nobody seemed to mind. . . . It makes me sick to read the news! . . . But the Ministers, instead of acting with quick decision, only assemble in council like a lot of frightened hens and cackle about providing united ministerial action. . . . One had the same feeling as before a thunderstorm in summer! . . . Through all those horrible days, I constantly met Witte. We very often met in the early morning to part only in the evening when night fell. . . . There were only two ways open; to find an energetic soldier and crush the rebellion by sheer force. . . . That would mean rivers of blood, and in the end we should be where we had started. . . . The other way out would be to give to the people their civil rights, freedom of speech and press, also to have all laws confirmed by a State Duma—that, of course, would be a constitution. Witte defends this very energetically. . . . Almost everybody I had an opportunity of consulting is of the same opinion. Witte put it quite clearly to me that he would accept the Presidency of the Council of Ministers only on the condition that his programme was agreed to, and his actions not interfered with. . . . We discussed it for two days and in the end, invoking God's help, I signed. . . . In my telegram I could not explain all the circumstances which brought me to this terrible decision, which nevertheless I took quite consciously. . . . There was no other way out than to cross oneself and give what everyone was asking for. . . . All the Ministers are resigning and we have to find new ones, but Witte must see to that. . . . We are in the midst of a revolution with an administrative apparatus entirely disorganized, and in this lies the main danger.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

November 23rd:

Everybody is afraid of taking courageous action; I keep on trying to force them—even Witte himself—to behave more energetically. With us nobody is accustomed to shouldering responsibility: all expect to be given orders which, however, they disobey as often as not.

December 14th:

He (Witte) is now prepared to order the arrest of all the principal leaders of the outbreak. I have been trying for some time past to get him to do it, but he always hoped to be able to manage without drastic measures.

December 21st:

Please don't worry so much about us. Of course, I am not going through an easy time, but God is my strength and gives me peace of mind. . . . So many Russians nowadays have lost that spirit. . . . Civic courage, as you know, is at the best of times noticeable here only among the few. Now it hardly seems to exist at all.

Maurice Baring, a keen English critic of Russian literature, was in Moscow when the granting of the Constitution was announced. He recorded the jubilant atmosphere:

I went to one of the big restaurants. There old men were embracing each other and drinking the first glass of vodka to free Russia. After luncheon I went out into the Theatre square. There is a fountain in it, which forms an excellent public platform. An orator mounted it and addressed the crowd. He began to read the Emperor's Manifesto. When he said, 'We are all too much used to the rascality of the Autocracy to believe this; away with the Autocracy!' the crowd, infuriated—they were evidently expecting an enthusiastic eulogy—cried, 'Away with you!' But instead of attacking the speaker who had aroused their indignation, they ran away from him! It was a curious sight. The spectators on the pavement were seized with panic and ran too. The orator, seeing his speech had missed fire, changed its tone and said, 'You have misunderstood me.' But what he had said was perfectly clear. This speaker was an ordinary Hyde Park orator, and not to be confused with the University professors who after-

wards spoke from the same platform. Later in the afternoon a procession of students arrived opposite my hotel with red flags, and collected outside the Governor-General's house. He appeared on the balcony and made a speech, in which he said that now there were no police he hoped that they would be able to keep order themselves. He asked them also to replace the red flag which was hanging on the lamp-post opposite the palace by the national flag. One little student climbed like a monkey up the lamp-post and hung a national flag there, but did not remove the red flag. Then the Governor asked them to sing the National Anthem, which they did; and as they went away they sang the Marseillaise.

'On peut très bien jouer ces deux airs à la fois
Et cela fait un air qui fait sauver les rois.'

At one moment a Cossack arrived, but an official came out of the house and told him he was not needed, upon which he went away amidst the jeers, cheers, hoots and whistling of the crowd. The day passed off quietly on the whole, the only untoward incidents being the death of a woman and the wounding of a student and a workman while trying to rescue a student from the prisoners' van. A veterinary surgeon called Bauman was also shot on this day.

Today for the first time I heard the phrase 'Black Gang' used. I was standing on the doorstep of the Hôtel Dresden, when a woman rushed frantically up and said the 'Black Gang' were coming. A student, belonging to a very good family, who was standing there, also explained that the 'Black Gang' consisted of roughs who supported the autocratic cause. His hand, which was bandaged, had been severely hurt while he was in the act of taking off his hat that day, by a Cossack who had beat it with a whip, thinking he was about to make a disturbance. He came up to my room, and from the hotel window we had a good view of the crowd, which proceeded to—

'attaquer la Marseillaise en la
Sur les cuivres, pendant que flûte soupire
En *mi bémol*: Veillons au salut de l'Empire.'

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

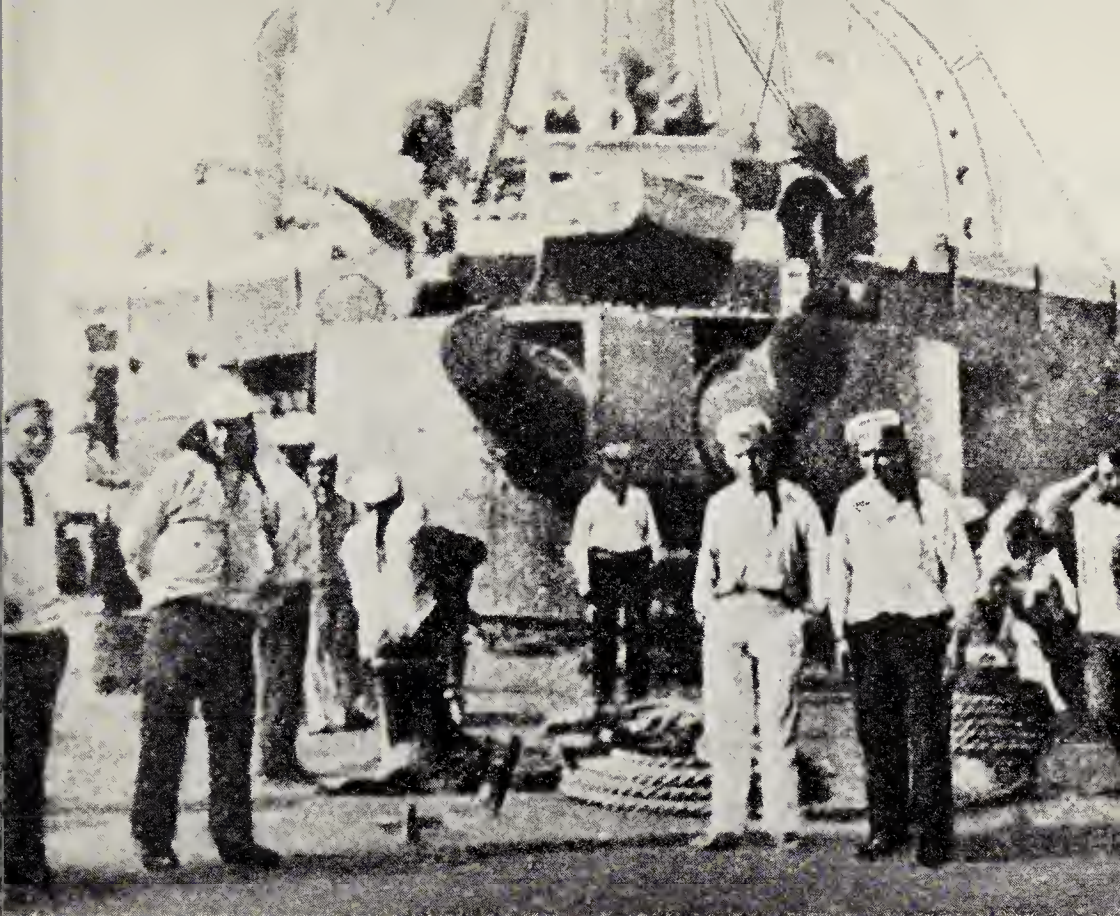
Wednesday, November 1st

At dinner at the Métropole Restaurant a strange scene occurred. At the end of dinner the band played the Marseillaise, and after it the National Anthem. Everybody stood up except one mild-looking man with spectacles, who went on calmly eating his dinner, upon which a man who was sitting at the other end of the room, and was rather drunk, rushed up to him and began to pull him about and drag him to his feet. He made a display of passive resistance, which proved effectual, and when he had finished his dinner he went away.

Thursday, November 2nd

The outward aspect of the town during these days is strange. Moscow seems like a city which has been undergoing a siege. Many of the shops have got great wooden shutters. Some of the doors have a large red cross on them. The distress, I am told, during the strike was terrible. There was no light, no gas, no water, all the shops were shut; provisions and wood were scarce. This afternoon I went to see Bauman's funeral procession, which I witnessed from many parts of the town. It was one of the most impressive sights I have ever seen. A hundred thousand men took part in it. The whole of the *Intelligentsia* (the professional and middle class) was in the streets or at the windows. The windows and balconies were crowded with people. The order was perfect. There was not a hitch nor a scuffle. The men walking in the procession consisted of students, doctors, workmen, people in various kinds of uniform. There were ambulances, with doctors dressed in white in them, in case there should be casualties. The men bore great red banners, and the coffin was covered with a scarlet pall. As they marched they sang in a low chant the 'Marseillaise'.

The constitutional outcome of the 1905 troubles was not unlike the Prussian solution of 1848. The Duma [see the Glossary] was given legislative powers for the first time in addition to its previous consultative powers: all laws had to receive its assent. But in effect the Tsar still remained the supreme ruler with very wide influence. He retained great control over the armed forces, and the Ministries of Foreign Policy and the Interior. The concession on Nicholas's part succeeded in breaking the strike and



1. THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION 1905
 (Photo: Radio Times Hulton
 Picture Library)



ON BOARD THE POTESKIN
 JUST AFTER THE MUTINY
 (Photo: Radio Times Hulton
 Picture Library)



2. RASPUTIN WITH SOCIETY LADIES
(Photo: Historisches Bildarchiv)

ushered in a period of relative calm which was to last until 1917. The army remained faithful throughout 1905, and the navy did not follow the lead given by the Potemkin. The Tsar's grain of liberalism also had the effect of dividing the more moderate opposition from the left wing; both elements continued to flounder for several years without leaders of real drive. The last serious outbreak of 1905, which took place in Moscow in December at the instigation of the Soviet, or council of workers [see the Glossary], was quelled with the arrival of a crack regiment from St. Petersburg. The doldrum years lay ahead.

CHAPTER II

THE YEARS BETWEEN 1906 — MARCH 1917

'I do not expect to see the revolution.'

LENIN

Following on the Constitution of October 1905, the First Duma with legislative powers met in the Tauride Palace in St. Petersburg in May 1906. Its scope for positive action was throttled from the start, since it was abhorred by Nicholas and the court on the one hand and by left-wing opinion on the other. The hesitancy of the new deputies at the start of a new essay in government was redoubled when Nicholas deprived them of their most experienced member, Witte, who lost the presidency of the council of ministers before the Duma assembled. Maurice Baring attended the Duma.

St. Petersburg, May 14th

I had the good fortune to gain admission to the Duma yesterday afternoon. I think it is the most interesting sight I have ever seen. When you arrive at the Tauride Palace, which outside has an appearance of dignified stateliness, the stateliness of the end of the eighteenth century, you walk through a spacious front hall into what looks like a gigantic white ballroom built in the late Louis XIV style. This is the lobby; beyond it is the Hall of the Duma itself. In this long gallery members and visitors were already flocking, walking up and down, talking, and smoking cigarettes and throwing away the ashes and the ends on the polished floor. One saw peasants in their long black coats, some of them wearing military medals and crosses; popes,¹ Tartars, Poles, men in every kind of dress except uniform. When the sitting began I went up into the gallery. The Hall of the Duma itself is likewise white, delicate in decoration, an essentially gentlemanlike room. The sitting began about three o'clock. The members go to their appointed places, on which their cards are fixed,

¹ Priests.

and the impression of diversity of dress and type becomes still stronger and more picturesque.

You see dignified old men in frock coats; aggressively democratic-looking 'intelligents', with long hair and pince-nez; a Polish bishop dressed in purple; men without collars; members of the proletariat; men in loose Russian shirts with belts; men dressed by Davies or Poole, and men dressed in the costume of two centuries ago. The President walked in to his seat under the portrait of the Emperor, which is a rather shiny study in blue and white. One thanked Heaven the Duma had not been re-decorated in the *art nouveau* style, for almost all the modern buildings in Russia, from Moscow to Harbin, are built in the mixture of Munich, Maple, and Japan which is called *art nouveau* (modern style), and in Russia 'decadent'.

The President, C. A. Muromtsev, strikes one as dignity itself. He exercises his functions with perfect serenity and absolute fairness. After reading congratulatory telegrams from various parts of the Empire he proceeded to read a motion proposed by a workman of the Government of Moscow that before proceeding further a telegram should be sent to the Emperor asking for a general amnesty for political offenders, and another motion asking for an immediate amnesty, proposed by a peasant. A debate ensued. The speeches were moderate. Most of the members spoke against the motion, and it seemed as if the matter was settled in the sense that the question of amnesty would be dealt with in the Reply to the Address and not before, when Professor Kovolyevsky proposed a third course, that the President of Duma should inform the Emperor of the unanimous desire of the Duma for a general amnesty. What struck me most in the speeches I heard was the naturalness of their tone, and the absence of declamatory emphasis. Several of the speeches were eloquent; only one was tedious. Professor Kovolyevsky began speaking in his seat, and went on with his speech quietly and in the most natural manner conceivable, as he walked up to the tribune, where he continued it, just as if he were engaged in a quiet talk with a few intimate friends. A second thing which struck me was the respect and the instantaneous obedience shown to the President; when he called to order by ringing his bell the silence was immediate and complete. Soon after four o'clock there was an entr'acte, and the Duma proceeded to elect the thirty-three members by whom the

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Reply to the Address is to be drawn up. The members poured into the gallery, and everywhere small groups collected discussing various matters; some carried on their discussions in the adjacent lobbies and rooms; many went to drink tea or have some food in the dining-room, where the accommodation is excellent.

Many of the small groups where the discussion was being carried on were interesting. One heard violent ideas and wild words being bandied about. One peasant said to a friend of mine, 'When I look upon this palace my blood boils; it was built out of the blood and the sweat of the poor.' So it was. 'Then you are a person who nurses hatred?' said my friend. 'Yes,' he answered. 'I hate, hate, hate the rich!' Another man told a lady of my acquaintance that he was a Socialist. She asked him if he was in favour of the land being made over to the State. He said, 'No.' He explained his views, which were really rather those of an extreme Radical than of a Socialist, clearly and with intelligence, and at the end she said to him, 'But you are not a Socialist?' 'Yes, I am,' he answered; and asked her who she was. She said that she was the daughter of a Count who is a member of the Duma. 'I am very pleased to have spoken with a Countess,' he answered, perfectly simply. I saw a big landed proprietor, he came up to me and said, 'This is very amusing for you; but to me it is life and death.' After the interval the sitting was continued. At 6.45 p.m. the result of the election of the thirty-three members was read out, and Professor Kovolyevsky's motion was debated shortly and rejected. After this the question of closure was discussed and referred to a committee. Then I left. The sitting came to an end shortly afterwards.

May 20th

This evening, as I was walking home to my lodgings, I was attracted by signs of disturbance in a side street off the Big Morskaia, where I live. I went to see what was happening. A drunken soldier was lurching down the street, making rude remarks to the passers-by. He was arrested and with difficulty guided to the police station, which happened to be in that street, by two policemen.

When they went into the police station a small crowd of men, women and children collected round the door, which was guarded by a small boy of about twelve years of age.

THE YEARS BETWEEN: 1906—MARCH 1917

A woman, with a shawl over her head, made an indignant speech to the assembled public about the arbitrariness of the police in arresting the poor soldiers. 'We know,' she said, 'what goes on in there. They're beating him now.'

'Shame!' cried the crowd, and made a move for the door. But the unkempt little boy who was guarding it said, 'You can't come in here.'

'Ah, we know you *dvorniks*' (door-keepers), said the woman; 'you are worse than the police.' 'Yah!' joined in the crowd, and a child said to the boy, with inexpressible contempt, 'Ugh! Satrap! Police-station chicken!'

Then the crowd broke up.

May 23rd

Every time I pay a fresh visit to the Duma I am struck by the originality of the appearance of its members. There is a Polish member who is dressed in light-blue tights, a short Eton jacket and Hessian boots. He has curly hair, and looks exactly like the hero of the 'Cavalleria Rusticana'. There is a Polish member who is dressed in a long white flannel coat reaching to his knees, adorned with an intricate pattern of dark crimson braid, and he also wears a long, soft, brown sleeveless cloak hanging from his shoulders, bordered with vermilion stripes. There are some Socialists who wear no collars, and there is, of course, every kind of headdress you can conceive. The second, and what is to me the principal impression of the Duma, is the familiar ease with which the members speak; some of them speak well, and some of them speak badly, but they all speak as if they had spoken in Parliament all their lives, without the slightest evidence of nervousness or shyness. The sittings of the Duma are like a meeting of acquaintances in a club or a *café*. There is nothing formal about them. The member walks up to the tribune and sometimes has a short conversation with the President before beginning his speech. Sometimes when he is called to order he indulges in a brief explanation. The last sitting I attended they did their work in a most businesslike manner and got through it fairly quickly and without many speeches. The peasants think there is too much speaking altogether. One of them said to me, 'There are people here who have no right to be here.' 'Who?' I asked. 'Popes, for instance,' he said. 'Why shouldn't popes be members?' I asked. 'Because they get 200 roubles a year,' he answered; 'what more

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

can they want?' If this principle were carried out in England, there would be no Members of Parliament at all.

Nobody can possibly say the Duma is disorderly; it takes itself with profound seriousness. Only one person has made a joke so far. The beauty of the hall in which the members sit is increased by its outlook, for the windows form a semi-circle behind the President's chair and they look out on a sheet of water and trees; a kind of Watteau-Versailles landscape where *fêtes galantes* were once probably held. Two peasants cross-questioned me narrowly the other day about England and English Parliamentary institutions. They asked me if there was an income tax in England, what sort of education I had received, what was the state of agriculture in England, what was the rotation of the crops (to which question I gave a vaguely complicated answer), and how long the House of Commons had existed.

Last Sunday I spent the afternoon at Peterhof, a suburb of St. Petersburg, where the Emperor lives. There, in the park amidst the trees, the splashing waterfalls, and the tall fountains, 'les grands jets d'eau sveltes parmi les marbres', the lilac bushes, and the song of many nightingales, the middle classes were enjoying their Sunday afternoon and the music of a band. In this beautiful and not inappropriate setting suddenly the Empress of Russia passed in an open carriage, without any escort, looking as beautiful as a flower. I could not help thinking of Marie Antoinette at the Trianon, and I wondered whether ten thousand swords would leap from their scabbards on her behalf.

Although the Duma got off to a very shaky start, it rallied slowly, and in 1907 took a firmer grip on the government of the country. As a result, by 1907 the revolutionary movement inside Russia was coming to a standstill. Abroad, an inconclusive conference was held in London. Ramsay MacDonald, the British Socialist leader, hired a church in the East End of London for the delegates, who had tried to meet in Copenhagen but had been driven out by the police. Gorky, the famous writer, attended the meeting:

When we were introduced, Lenin shook my hand heartily, and looking me over with his keen eyes and speaking like an old acquaintance, he said jocularly, 'So glad you've come. I believe

you're fond of a scrap. There's going to be a fine free-for-all here.' I hadn't expected Lenin to be like that. Something was lacking in him. He rolled his r's gutturally, and had a jaunty way of standing with his hands poked up somewhere under his armpits. He seemed too ordinary, did not give the impression of a leader. . . . But now Vladimir Il'ich [*Lenin*] hurries to the pulpit and cries *Comrades!* in his guttural way. He seemed to me to speak badly, but after a minute I and everybody else was absorbed in his speech. It was the first time I had heard complicated questions treated so simply. . . . No striving after eloquent phases . . . but every word uttered distinctly and its meaning marvellously plain. . . . He was interrupted by shouts of hatred. One tall, bearded individual kept jumping up from his seat and stuttering: 'Little p-plots . . . p-playing at little p-plots!' . . . These hostile thrusts had no noticeable effect on him.

By 1909, when Lenin settled in Paris, disillusionment had touched even him. Four years had passed since any decisive revolutionary action had been taken in Russia, and the Duma was beginning to go about its work with more confidence. In Paris in 1909-10, Lenin and his wife lived a melancholy existence typical of many other revolutionaries in exile. Out of touch with Russia and even with their fellow exiles, they spent most of their time worrying about such commonplace problems as money, finding a place to live and keeping warm. Krupskaja describes their humdrum life:

Vladimir Il'ich took only a very remote interest in the effort we were making to fix up our new quarters. He had more important things to think about. We rented an apartment on the outskirts of the city in the Rue Bonier, near the fortifications, a street adjoining the Avenue d'Orléans not far from the Parc Montsouris. The apartment was light and spacious and even had mirrors over the fireplaces. (This was a special feature of the new houses.) There was a room for my mother, one for Maria Ilyinishna who had arrived in Paris, one for Vladimir Il'ich and myself, and a living room. But this rather luxurious apartment did not at all fit in with our mode of life and the 'furniture' we brought from Geneva. The contempt with which the *concierge* looked upon our white deal tables, common chairs and stools was

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

worth seeing. In our 'parlour' we had only a couple of chairs and a small table. It was not cosy by any means.

*

It was very difficult to study in Paris. The 'Bibliothèque Nationale' was far from where we lived. Vladimir Il'ich would generally cycle there, but riding a bicycle in Paris was not what it was in the suburbs of Geneva. It entailed much effort. Il'ich would get very tired from these rides. The library closed at lunch time. Then there was a lot of bother in getting books from the library. Il'ich railed against the library and against Paris. I wrote to a French professor who in the summer had conducted French courses in Geneva, asking him to recommend other good libraries. I received an answer immediately with the necessary information. Il'ich made the rounds of all the libraries recommended but could not find a suitable one. In the end his bicycle was stolen. He used to leave it under the staircase at the house adjoining the 'Bibliothèque Nationale' and paid the *concierge* ten centimes a day for this. When the bicycle was stolen the *concierge* declared that she had not undertaken to watch the bicycle, but merely to allow Il'ich to put it up under the staircase.

One had to be very careful in riding a bicycle in Paris and in the suburbs. Once on his way to Juvisy, Il'ich collided with an automobile. He barely managed to jump clear, but the bicycle was smashed.

*

*

*

Lenin . . . established a certain routine, as he called it. He would get up at eight o'clock in the morning, go to the 'Bibliothèque Nationale', return at 2 p.m. He also did a lot of work at home. I tried to keep people away from him. We always had many visitors, crowds upon crowds, especially at this time when, owing to the reaction raging in Russia, and the trying conditions of work, emigration from Russia increased very considerably. People would arrive from Russia and relate with enthusiasm what was going on there, but soon they seemed to wilt. They become submerged in the daily effort to earn a living and the petty worries of life.

The increasing success of the Duma after 1909 was due to the brilliant leadership of Stolypin, who became Prime Minister in that year. Stolypin was a moderate who deplored revolutionary

THE YEARS BETWEEN: 1906—MARCH 1917

violence but genuinely desired extensive reforms. He had a clear brain and acted swiftly on his ideas. With one hand he stemmed the far left wing by establishing courts empowered to deal swiftly and harshly with terrorists: with the other he set in motion an ambitious programme of land reform. Addressing himself to the Second Duma, he spelt out his motto: 'You want great convulsions, but we want a great Russia.' Considering the enormous difficulties which hampered his work, Stolypin achieved much in a short time.

Steering a middle course, he made enemies both amongst Tsarist circles and on the left. After only two years in office, he was assassinated on September 14, 1911. Russia seemed to be intent on destroying herself willy-nilly.

Nicholas had gone to Kiev on a ceremonial visit, and Stolypin joined him at the opera house. A terrorist called Dmitri Bogrov fired at the Prime Minister and killed him. Nicholas describes the scene in a letter to his mother:

Olga and Tatiana [his two eldest daughters] were with me at the time. During the second interval we had just left the box, as it was so hot, when we heard two sounds as if something had been dropped. I thought that an opera glass might have fallen on somebody's head, and ran back into the box to look. To the right I saw a group of officers and other people. They seemed to be dragging someone along. Women were shrieking and, directly in front of me in the stalls, Stolypin was standing; he slowly turned his face towards us and with his left hand made the sign of the cross in the air. Only then did I notice that he was very pale and that his right hand and uniform were bloodstained. He slowly sank into his chair and began to unbutton his tunic. . . . People were trying to lynch the assassin. I am sorry to say the police rescued him from the crowd and took him to an isolated room for his first examination. . . . Then the theatre filled up again, the national anthem was sung, and I left the girls at eleven. You can imagine with what emotions!

On August 1, 1914, war broke out between Russia and Germany. At first it helped to pull the country together and appeared to drive away the clouds of revolution. Patriotism was the binding force. Forgetting for a moment that the Empress was a

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

German, the Russian people responded warmly to Nicholas's war oath of August 2nd, in which he repeated Alexander I's vow in the face of Napoleon's invasion, not to ask for peace until all foreign troops had been driven out of Russia. The nation's nobility abandoned its malaise and put its back into the war effort. The workers for their part no longer indulged in strikes but took to arms. Even the divided Duma voted almost as one man in favour of the war.

But before long, past follies crept back into the political scene. The high command of the army was at first given to Grand Duke Nicholas, although from the start the Tsar attempted to secure the position so that he could run the country both at home and at the front. In this way he hoped to avoid a conflict of policies between the capital and the battle lines. He was egged on by the Empress, who took a personal dislike to the Grand Duke. Against the advice of nearly all his Ministers, Nicholas insisted in September 1915 on taking over the high command. Most of the Cabinet sent the following letter to the Tsar:

Most gracious Sovereign, Do not find fault with us for appealing to you boldly and frankly. Our action is dictated by loyalty and love for you and our country and by our anxious recognition of the menacing character of what is happening around us. Yesterday at the meeting of the Council, at which you presided, we unanimously begged you not to remove Grand Duke Nicholas from the High Command of the Army. We fear that Your Majesty was not willing to grant our prayer, which is, we think, the prayer of all loyal Russians. We venture once more to tell you that to the best of our judgment your decision threatens with serious consequences Russia, your dynasty and your person. At the same meeting you could see for yourself the irreconcilable difference between our Chairman and us in our estimate of the situation in the country and of the policy to be pursued by the Government. Such a state of things is inadmissible at all times, and at the present moment it is fatal. Under such conditions we do not believe we can be of real service to Your Majesty and to our country.

P. Haritonov, A. Krivoshein, S. Sazonov, P. Bark,
Prince N. Shcherbatov, A. Samarin, Count P. Ignatiev,
Prince V. Shakhovskoi.

THE YEARS BETWEEN: 1906—MARCH 1917

Nicholas duly left for the front, leaving the court behind him under the malignant influence of the Empress, now almost completely under the spell of Rasputin, whom we shall meet in a moment. Even a far more able man than Nicholas II would have been overwhelmed by the complexity and magnitude of the responsibilities falling to him as a result of his dual position. At the front he was endangering his life on a foolish mission full of bravado and little common sense. The exaggerated effusions of the Empress followed him in her letters. They are redolent of the quasi-hysterical atmosphere that reigned in court circles at the time.

I cannot find words to express all I want to—my heart is far too full. . . . I only want to whisper words of intense love, courage, strength, and endless blessings. . . . You have fought this great fight for your country and throne. . . . Our souls are fighting for the right against the evil. . . . It is all much deeper than appears to the eye. . . . You are proving yourself the Autocrat without which Russia cannot exist. . . . God anointed you at your coronation. He placed you where you stand, and you have done your duty. . . . Being firm is the only saving—I know what it costs you, and I suffer hideously for you; forgive me I beseech you, my Angel, for having left you no peace and worried you so much—but I knew too well your marvellously gentle character—and you had to shake it off this time, had to win your fight alone against all. It is to be a glorious page in your reign and in Russian history, the story of these weeks and days—and God, Who is always near you, will save your country and throne through your firmness. . . . Our Friend's [Rasputin] prayers arise night and day for you to Heaven, and God will hear them. . . . Your sun is rising. . . . Sleep well, my sunshine, Russia's Saviour.

Despite Russian enthusiasm for the war effort at the outset, mismanagement soon became its most salient characteristic. Visiting Warsaw as early as November 1914, Rodzianko, the President of the Duma, noted the disorder in the army and discussed the situation with Grand Duke Nicholas, who still had the high command of the army at this time:

While at Warsaw, I asked permission of Grand Duke Nicholas

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Nicholaevich to go to Headquarters. I wished to tell him what I had seen and heard at Warsaw. General Ruzsky had complained to me of lack of ammunition and the poor equipment of the men. There was a great shortage of boots. In the Carpathians, the soldiers fought barefooted. . . .

The hospitals and stations of the Red Cross, which came under my notice, were in excellent condition; but the war hospitals were disorganized. They were short of bandages and such things. The great evil was, of course, the lack of co-operation between the two organizations. At the front, one had to walk about ten or more versts [*a verst is two-thirds of a mile*] from the war hospitals to those of the Red Cross. It was impossible to hire a cart because the inhabitants had either fled or lost all they owned.

The Grand Duke received me in a very friendly manner. . . . He approved my suggestion for collecting carts, filled with straw, for the transportation of wounded. In the course of a few days, carts and horses were being requisitioned in our *guberniia* for use at the front. . . .

The Grand Duke stated that he was obliged to stop fighting, temporarily, for lack of ammunition and boots.

'You have influence,' he said. 'You are trusted. Try and get boots for the army, as soon as possible.'

I replied that this could be done if the *zemstvos* [*see the Glossary*] and public organizations were asked to help. There was plenty of material and labour in Russia. But as it stood then, one *guberniia* had leather, another nails, another soles, and still another cheap labour. The best thing to do would be to call a congress of the heads of the *guberniia zemstvos* and ask their co-operation. The Grand Duke was greatly pleased with this idea.

When I returned to Petrograd, I asked members of the Duma their opinion as to the best way to get boots. After considering the matter, we decided to circularize to heads of *zemstvos* and mayors of cities.

The Russian war effort went from bad to worse after the opening months of hostilities. Russian armies were beaten in East Prussia, then in Galicia in the spring of 1915. Muddle at the front combined with inefficient management in Petrograd (which had been renamed at the beginning of the war from patriotic impulse in order to avoid the German-sounding name of St. Peters-

THE YEARS BETWEEN: 1906—MARCH 1917

burg) brought disaster in their train. In January 1917, two months before the March revolution, Bernard Pares, an English student of Russia, recorded his impressions of the front:

Several times I took some of my English companions with me on my visits to the front. One day, Dr. Flavell, head of the Anglo-Russian hospital, came up with me. We went to a grisly place, a slope which it was impossible to descend except by daylight, and which was then always commanded from the rear by German machine-guns. On the top the men had tried to scrape the trenches out of the rock; the wind constantly swept the snow about, even when none was falling, and it was a heavy day's work simply to keep these shallow lines from being silted up. When we got back, I asked Dr. Flavell his impressions. He possessed a standard of comparison, for he had done a lot of winter war-work in the Vosges. He told me that his conclusions were three: first, that the officers absolutely shared the privations of the men, in which I can entirely bear him out; second, that human life in these conditions was impossible for more than a fortnight; a fortnight was exactly the time that each regiment stood in line, and then it only went into the reserve for a week; thirdly, he said that anyone wounded here in the head or the stomach was a lost man, for in these conditions it was practically impossible to get the heavily wounded to the rear. Our line was terribly thin—generally about one man to five yards, and sometimes with no second line behind it. The troops in this long, thin line were commanded by young officers barely trained, who had only lately come up to the army. There was one sinister spot which the Russian soldiers always called the Electric Lamp. It was a deadly hill which, at several points in our rear, seemed suddenly to pop up right above us and command us completely. This was the hill which the Novo-Trotsky Regiment had failed to take. I can see now its grim outline at night, as I gazed in fascination at it from just opposite. Such were our conditions on the eve of the Revolution.

Maxim Gorky, the famous Russian writer, who was later to flirt with the Soviets, left this impression of the man-in-the-street's reaction in Petrograd to the sad news from the front:

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

In the garden in front of the *Narodnyi Dom* [*the Russian National Theatre*] a heterogeneous group of people was listening to the bold words of a little soldier. He had a bandage round his head and his bright eyes shone with inspiration. He spoke in a high-pitched voice, and clutched at the people standing next to him, in his anxiety to impress his audience.

‘As a matter of fact,’ he said, ‘we are, of course, the stronger but in every other respect we can’t hold a candle to them. The German fights with calculation, he uses his soldiers carefully. whereas we—slap bang—all the gruel’s thrown into the pot at once. . . .’

A huge, sturdy peasant in a torn overcoat here remarked in a weighty, businesslike way: ‘We’ve got more people than we know what to do with. Thank God we go to work differently from the Germans. Our whole object is to reduce the number of people in this country, so that those who survive can have more room.’

He yawned luxuriously as he said this. I tried to detect some irony in his words, but his face might have been carved out of stone, and his eyes were calm and sleepy.

A grey, crumpled-up little man chimed in. ‘That’s right,’ he said. ‘That’s what the war is for—either to seize a foreign land or to diminish the number of people in our own.’ The soldier went on: ‘Besides, a mistake has been made already in giving Poland to the Poles. They’re all over the place. Some have gone over to the Huns, others to us, and now they are all mixed up. They’re not anxious to go on killing each other.’

‘Oh—if they were made to,’ asserted the big peasant with calm conviction, ‘they’d kill each other all right. If only there was someone to keep them at it, they’d go on killing. Our folk like fighting.’

*

On the whole I find that the man in the street speaks of this abominable, desecrating slaughter as though it were something to which he is a complete stranger, something that he is watching as a spectator; sometimes he speaks of it with a certain amount of ill-will, though I cannot make out against whom this ill-will is directed. Criticism of the authorities has not perceptibly increased, nor does opposition to them seem to be growing. What is noticeable is the rise of a disgusting, common anarchism. Opposed to it are the opinions of the workmen, who are fully

THE YEARS BETWEEN: 1906—MARCH 1917

aware how incomparably better developed are their understanding of the tragedy, their instinct of statesmanship, their humanity even. This is apparent even among the unorganized workers, not to mention the regular party men like P. A. Skorokhodov.

Not very long ago, for instance, the latter was heard to remark: 'As a class we shall gain from a military defeat—which is, of course, the chief thing. But in spite of that, one's soul revolts at the idea. One can't help feeling ashamed of fighting and yet of being sorry for the people who fight. I simply can't tell you how sorry. Just think: all the healthiest people are getting killed over there, the people who should be starting their work tomorrow. The Revolution will want all the healthiest. Will there be enough of us?'

In November 1905 the Tsar had made a fateful entry in his diary. 'We got acquainted with a man of God, Gregory, from the Tobolsk province.' This was Rasputin, the ignorant but astute peasant who soon came to wield incalculable power in affairs of state through his influence over the Empress. Of immense stature and strength, Rasputin wormed his way into the court by claiming to have miraculous powers of healing which could be used to good effect on the Empress's only son, the heir to the Russian throne, a physical weakling who often appeared to be on the verge of dying. Rasputin's hypnotic eyes and imposing looks played havoc with the sensibilities of ladies in Petrograd society, who vied with each other for his favours, ignoring his crude manners and enormous appetite for drink.

If Rasputin's influence had been confined to the domestic affairs of the Royal Family, he might not have had such a disastrous effect on the course of Russian history, but it was not long before he began to meddle in high politics. The Tsar himself had a weak character and submitted to the will of Alexandra on many points; she in turn yielded to Rasputin's whims. After Nicholas left for the front in September 1915, Rasputin virtually governed Russia through the Empress, appointing and dismissing ministers like ninepins according to his personal and highly idiosyncratic tastes. The weak Government became even weaker as a consequence. Alexandra, a retiring woman of German origin who had never been really liked by the Russian aristocracy or the people, became more unpopular after the rise of Rasputin, and

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

the scandals surrounding Rasputin's private life cast aspersions on the monarchy as a whole.

Early in 1915 a report came into Petrograd of Rasputin's misbehaviour in his native province of Tobolsk at that time:

Rasputin on a steamer, when he was not sober, started entertaining some recruits, singing and dancing with them; and when at the request of the passengers who complained of his annoying them, the captain moved him from the first class to the second, he wanted to treat the recruits to dinner in the second class; and when the steward refused to lay the table, and it seems, to serve wine for him, he inflicted a physical insult on the steward. On the demand of the public the captain, who had witnessed this scene, in spite of Rasputin's protests, put him ashore at the nearest pier, where the captain and steward insisted that the police should draw up a report. The police, taking into account that it was Rasputin, and knowing the demand circulated at that time to smother up facts of this kind in Rasputin's conduct, before sending the case to court, to avoid wide publicity, addressed their report to the Governor.

Rasputin explained the matter to A. N. Khvostov and myself in a somewhat different light. Rasputin maintained to us that he was not drunk, that he did not annoy women and passengers, but they provoked him to a scandal, that the captain of the ship took their side for reasons of principle in consequence of his liberalism, knowing that it was Rasputin, that it was entirely under the influence of the captain that the steward made his official complaint against him, which the police did not want to report, but that the captain insisted on this; and that in general there was no drunken hooliganism, as in entertaining a party of recruits on their way to the war he, Rasputin, acted on purely patriotic motives and, besides that, in his talks with them he had emphasized the attitude of the Emperor and Empress to the war in the highest tones of patriotism, and that he was offended with the steward because he had not let recruits, who were setting out to shed their blood, into the saloon of the second class, whither he had himself gone as the public there were simpler folk. This was the light in which Rasputin put this story, but taking it all round, it was clear that the matter did not stand as he said, for he was afraid of this case being made public. This

was what was also asserted to me by Abbot Martemian, one of Rasputin's clerical companions, whom I asked about it when he came later to see me in my flat.

According to Martemian it was clear that Rasputin was very drunk and annoyed the public, and that when no one wanted to drink with him he went to the recruits, and while entertaining them, himself drank with them. For Martemian it was very humiliating to leave the boat with Rasputin, under a storm of derision from those present, whether on the boat or on shore, and that his, Martemian's request to the captain not to land them and not to draw up a report, had no effect on the captain of the boat.

Rasputin's private life became such a public scandal and of such danger to the running of the State that the secret police was instructed to trace all his movements. Here is an extract from its report for 1915:

July 9th. Rasputin received Father Sergei, the newly-appointed priest of Pokrovskoe, who also kissed his hands. At eight o'clock in the evening Rasputin left his house, very red in the face, apparently in a slightly inebriated condition, in the company of Solovieva. They mounted a carriage and drove to a distant wood. They came back in an hour's time, Rasputin looking very pale.

July 11th. The wife of an officer, Patushinskaia, came from Yalutorovsk to see Rasputin. Shortly afterwards Solovieva and Patushinskaia emerged from the house, leading Rasputin between them, all three interlocked, Rasputin holding Patushinskaia by the lower part of the body. They played the gramophone throughout the greater part of the day, Rasputin being exceedingly gay, and consuming large quantities of wine and beer.

July 12th. Solovieva has been recalled to Petrograd by her husband. Rasputin went to the wife of the local psalm-reader, Yermolai. They had apparently made an appointment, as she was waiting for him at the window. He visits her practically each day with intentions of an intimate nature. On this occasion he stayed with her for half an hour. Patushinskaia has gone back to Yalutorovsk, having been recalled by her husband. She took

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

passionate leave of Rasputin covering his face, hands and beard with kisses.

July 14th. Rasputin has gone to Tobolsk to see Varnava; the agents were left behind.

Rasputin's misdeeds created such an uproar in the country that by March 1916 Rodzianko, the President of the Duma, thought it his duty to face up to the Tsar and demand Rasputin's exile from the court:

Profiting by the Tsar's arrival at Tsarskoe [Tsarskoe Selo, one of the Tsar's palaces near Petrograd] I asked for an audience and was received by him on March 8th. The audience lasted an hour and a half. I told him everything—of the intrigues of the ministers who worked against each other through Rasputin, of the lack, as formerly, of a definite policy, of the abuses everywhere, of the failure to take public opinion into consideration, and of the limit of public endurance. I reminded him of the adventures of . . . heroes of the rear, of their contacts with Rasputin, of his dissipations and orgies, and that his relation to the Tsar and his family and his influence on State matters in these war times deeply aroused honest people. There was no doubt that Rasputin was a German agent and spy.

'If Your Majesty's ministers were really free agents and had, as their single object, the good of the country, the presence of a man like Rasputin would carry no weight in State matters. But the trouble is that they are dependent on him and draw him into their intrigues. I must tell Your Majesty that this cannot continue much longer. No one opens your eyes to the true role which this man is playing. His presence in Your Majesty's Court undermines confidence in the Supreme Power and may have an evil effect on the fate of the dynasty and turn the hearts of the people from their Emperor.'

While I was enumerating these sad truths, the Tsar was either silent or showed astonishment, but was at all times affable and courteous. When I finished, he asked, 'How do you think the war will end—in our favour or against us?'

I replied that we could count on the army and the people, but that it was the military leaders and the internal politics that stood in the way of victory.

THE YEARS BETWEEN: 1906—MARCH 1917

My report did some good. On March 11th an order was issued sending Rasputin to Tobolsk; but a few days later, at the demand of the Empress, this order was cancelled. . . .

During Nicholas's absence at the front, Rasputin succeeded in having a wildly unsuitable man appointed to the important post of Ministers of the Interior in September 1916. This was Protopopov, a sick person who took an unhealthy interest in mysticism. He was suspected of having made overtures to the Germans with the aim of making a separate peace on terms unfavourable to Russia. The Tsar commented on the new move: 'Our Friend's [Rasputin's] opinions of people are sometimes very strange', but he yielded to Alexandra's wish. Purishkevich, a reactionary deputy in the Duma, wrote some biting verses to celebrate the ludicrous occasion:

On the appointment of the respected A. D. Protopopov

The 'Stormer'¹ period still goes on;
The pace it goes is simply mad;
Whatever else we lack, there's none
Could count the Ministers we've had.

The order of our State is sage;
It's founded on a solid plan:
Portfolios are now the rage,
And those who want to get them can.

They've just to make their bow, you see;
No programme needed—that's all right:
Some talkative, like Bobrinsky,²
And some that keep the mouth shut tight.

They come, they sniff the dainty bread,
But never reach the feast, alack!
Then, cursing all in terms ill-bred,
They turn and leave the beaten track.

*

¹ A pun on Stürmer, a shallow reactionary who was appointed Prime Minister in February 1916 with the backing of Rasputin and the Empress.

² The inefficient Minister of Agriculture.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

With flashing folds of uniforms,
With stars and crosses in a shower,
Demure officials come in swarms
To hail the idols of the hour.

But well received, they grow more bold,
And scratch their heads and whisper low;
'I don't suppose that *he* will hold;
About a month—and out *he'll* go.'

A bird of passage! Look around—
The gossip of the town is new;
You'll see your Minister uncrowned
Within a month—or rarely two.

By minutes now we count their term;
They go, and leave a sulphurous smell;
Only Rasputin still holds firm—
And long-named Pitirim as well.

Purishkevich followed up his attack on the Government by making an important speech in the Duma in December 1916. Although men of many different persuasions were agreed that Purishkevich expressed the general discontent, none of them took any further action—except Prince Yusopov, a young relation of the Tsar who felt a passionate urge to save the country. Purishkevich writes:

December 2, 1916.

For the first time in many years I have had the moral satisfaction to feel that I have done my duty honestly, conscientiously, and courageously. I made a speech in the Duma on the present state of Russia. I addressed myself to the Government, demanding that the truth be laid bare before the Emperor, who is surrounded by clever intriguers. I demanded that the Monarch be warned against the danger that threatens Russia from the obscure forces in the rear. . . .

Today, for the first time, I have gone back on my oath—oath of silence. I did it not for political reasons, not for the sake of gaining the goodwill of the militant members of the hostile political parties, but in order that the voice of the Russian people might reach the throne.

*

THE YEARS BETWEEN: 1906—MARCH 1917

I expressed the thoughts of thousands of the best Russians, regardless of political parties and opinions. I felt that I had done so as I left the Duma platform after having spoken for two hours. I felt it in the shouts of 'Bravo'; in the clapping of the hands, in the faces of the excited crowd which gathered around me after my speech. Among them were representatives of Russian society; for on this day the Tauride Palace was filled with the intellectual and social leaders of the nation and its highest functionaries.

I know that I have expressed the feeling of Russia. I know that there was not a single false note in my speech. . . .

December 3rd

I have not had a moment's peace today. As I sat at my desk I have been kept busy answering the telephone, which has not stopped ringing for a second. From morning until evening all kinds of people, known or unknown, call up to congratulate me. I must confess that it has reached a point where I can no longer remain at my desk. It is difficult to imagine a situation more stupid than the one I am in, sitting listening to these nightingales singing my praise without being able to stop them.

*

Among those who telephoned was a Prince Yusupov, Count Sumarokov-Elston. He aroused my curiosity. After expressing the usual compliments he inquired if he could see me to explain certain things about Rasputin's relation with the Court, things which he could not tell over the telephone. I made an appointment for tomorrow morning at nine. I am anxious to know what he has to say and what he wants.

December 4th

He was on time . . . and at once made a very good impression on me. . . . He looks as if he possessed a great deal of will power and much strength of character. . . .

'Your speech will not have the results you expect,' said he. 'The Emperor does not like to have one bring pressure on him. Rasputin's power will grow greater rather than less owing to his boundless influence over the Empress. It is she who really governs the State. The Emperor is at Headquarters much occupied with military operations.'

'Well, what are we going to do about it?' I asked.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

He gave me a mysterious smile and looked me straight in the face.

‘Get rid of Rasputin.’

‘That’s easy to say. But who will do it? Russia has nobody with backbone enough for such a deed. The Government could do it easily, but the Government clings to him and watches over him as if he were a treasure.’

‘Yes,’ said Yusupov, ‘one cannot count on the Government, but I dare say there are men in Russia who would do it.’

‘Do you think so?’

‘I know it. One of them is right before you. . . .’

I smiled. ‘Prince,’ said I to him, ‘I am no longer astonished at anything that happens in Russia. I am not trying to get anything for myself; I have no personal ambitions. But if you wish . . . to deliver Russia from Rasputin, here is my hand. We are going to examine the means to bring it about, and we will undertake it if we can find some others to join us. . . .’

Prince Yusupov, Purishkevich and three accomplices carried out their plot to kill Rasputin in Yusupov’s house; the Prince continues the story:

When everything was ready, I put on an overcoat and drew a fur cap over my ears, completely concealing my face. Doctor Lazovet, in a chauffeur’s uniform, started up the engine and we got into the car which was waiting in the courtyard by the side entrance. On reaching Rasputin’s house, I had to parley with the janitor before he agreed to let me in. In accordance with Rasputin’s instructions, I went up the back staircase; I had to grope my way up in the dark, and only with the greatest difficulty found the ‘staretz’s’ door. I rang the bell.

‘Who’s that?’ called a voice from inside.

I begin to tremble. ‘It’s I, Gregory Efimovich. I’ve come for you.’

I could hear Rasputin moving about the hall. The chain was unfastened, the heavy lock grated. I felt very ill at ease.

He opened the door and I went into the kitchen. It was dark. I imagined that someone was spying on me from the next room. Instinctively, I turned up my collar and pulled my cap down over my eyes.

‘Why are you trying to hide?’ asked Rasputin.

‘Didn’t we agree that no one was to know you were going out with me tonight?’

‘True, true; I haven’t said a word about it to anyone in the house, I’ve even sent away all the *tainiks* [*members of the secret police*]. I’ll go and dress.’

I accompanied him to his bedroom; it was lighted only by the little lamp burning before the ikons. Rasputin lit a candle; I noticed that his bed was crumpled. He had probably been resting. Near the bed were his overcoat and beaver cap, on the ground his high felt-lined galoshes.

Rasputin wore a silk blouse embroidered in cornflowers, with a thick raspberry-coloured cord as a belt. His velvet breeches and highly polished boots seemed brand new; he had brushed his hair and carefully combed his beard. As he came close to me, I smelt a strong odour of cheap soap which indicated that he had taken pains with his appearance. I had never seen him look so clean and tidy.

‘Well, Gregory Efimovich, it’s time to go; it’s past midnight.’

‘What about the gypsies? Shall we pay them a visit?’

‘I don’t know; perhaps,’ I answered.

‘There will be no one at your house but us tonight?’ he asked, with a note of anxiety in his voice.

I reassured him by saying that he would meet no one that he might not care to see, and that my mother was in the Crimea.

‘I don’t like your mother. I know she hates me; she’s a friend of Elisabeth’s. Both of them plot against me and spread slander about me too. The Tsarina herself has often told me that they were my worst enemies. Why, no earlier than this evening Protopopov came to see me and made me swear not to go out for a few days. “They’ll kill you,” he declared. “Your enemies are bent on mischief!” But they’d just be wasting time and trouble; they won’t succeed, they are not powerful enough. . . . But that’s enough, come on, let’s go.’

I picked up the overcoat and helped him on with it.

Suddenly, a feeling of great pity for the man swept over me. I was ashamed of the despicable deceit, the horrible trickery to which I was obliged to resort. At that moment I was filled with self-contempt, and wondered how I could even have thought of such a cowardly crime. I could not understand how I had brought myself to decide on it.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

I looked at my victim with dread, as he stood before me, quiet and trusting. What had become of his second-sight? What good did his gift of foretelling the future do him? Of what use was his faculty for reading the thoughts of others, if he was blind to the dreadful trap that was laid for him? It seemed as though fate had clouded his mind . . . to allow justice to deal with him according to his deserts. . . .

But suddenly, in a lightning flash of memory, I seemed to recall every stage of Rasputin's infamous life. My qualms of conscience disappeared, making room for a firm determination to complete my task.

We walked to the dark landing, and Rasputin closed the door behind him.

Once more I heard the grating of the lock echoing down the staircase; we were in pitch-black darkness. I felt fingers roughly clutching at my hand. 'I will show you the way,' said the 'staretz' dragging me down the stairs.

His grip hurt me, I felt like crying out and breaking away, but a sort of numbness came over me. I don't remember what he said to me, or whether I answered him; my one thought was to be out of the dark house as quickly as possible, to get back to the light, and to free myself from that hateful clutch. As soon as we were outside, my fears vanished and I recovered my self-control.

We entered the car and drove off. I looked behind us to see whether the police were following; but there was no one, the streets were deserted.

We drove a roundabout way to the Moïka, entered the courtyard and, once more, the car drew up at the side entrance.

As we entered the house, I could hear my friends talking while the gramophone played 'Yankee Doodle went to town'.

'What's all this?' asked Rasputin. 'Is someone giving a party here?'

'No, just my wife entertaining a few friends; they'll be going soon. Meanwhile, let's have a cup of tea in the dining-room.'

We went down to the basement. As soon as Rasputin entered the room, he took off his overcoat and began inspecting the furniture with great interest. He was particularly fascinated by the little ebony cabinet, and took a childlike pleasure in opening and shutting the drawers, exploring it inside and out.

THE YEARS BETWEEN: 1906—MARCH 1917

Then, at the fateful moment, I made a last attempt to persuade him to leave St Petersburg. His refusal sealed his fate. I offered him wine and tea; to my great disappointment, he refused both. Had something made him suspicious? I was determined, come what may, that he should not leave the house alive.

We sat down at the table and began to talk. We reviewed our mutual acquaintances, not forgetting Anna Virubov and, naturally, touched on Tsarskoe Selo. 'Gregory Afimovich,' I asked, 'why did Protopopov go to see you? Is he still afraid of a conspiracy?'

'Why yes, my dear boy, he is; it seems that my plain speaking annoys a lot of people. The aristocrats can't get used to the idea that a humble peasant should be welcome at the Imperial palace. . . . They are consumed with envy and fury. . . . But I'm not afraid of them. They can't do anything to me. I'm protected against ill fortune. There have been several attempts on my life but the Lord has always frustrated these plots. Disaster will come to anyone who lifts a finger against me.'

Rasputin's words echoed ominously through the very room in which he was to die, but nothing could deter me now. While he talked, my one idea was to make him drink some wine and eat the cakes.

After exhausting his customary topics of conversation, Rasputin asked for some tea. I immediately poured out a cup and handed him a plate of biscuits. Why was it that I offered him the only biscuits that were not poisoned? I even hesitated before handing him the cakes sprinkled with cyanide.

He refused them at first: 'I don't want any, they're too sweet.' At last, however, he took one, then another. . . . I watched him, horror-stricken. The poison should have acted immediately but, to my amazement, Rasputin went on talking quite calmly.

I then suggested that he should sample our Crimean wines. He once more refused. Time was passing, I was becoming nervous; in spite of his refusal, I filled two glasses. But, as in the case of the biscuits—and just as inexplicably—I again avoided using a glass containing cyanide. Rasputin changed his mind and accepted the wine I handed him. He drank it with enjoyment, found it to his taste and asked whether we made a great deal of wine in the Crimea. He seemed rather surprised to hear that we had cellars full of it.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

‘Pour me out some Madeira,’ he said. This time I wanted to give it to him in a glass containing cyanide, but he protested: ‘I’ll have it in the same glass.’

‘You can’t, Gregory Efimovich,’ I replied, ‘you can’t mix two kinds of wines.’

‘It doesn’t matter, I’ll use the same glass, I tell you. . . .’

I had to give in without pressing the point, but I managed, as if by mistake, to drop the glass from which he had drunk, and immediately poured the Madeira into a glass containing cyanide. Rasputin did not say anything.

I stood watching him drink, expecting any moment to see him collapse.

But he continued slowly to sip his wine like a connoisseur. His face did not change, only from time to time he put his hand to his throat as though he had some difficulty in swallowing. He rose and took a few steps. When I asked him what was the matter, he answered: ‘Why, nothing, just a tickling in my throat.’

‘The Madeira’s good,’ he remarked, ‘give me some more.’

Meanwhile, the poison continued to have no effect, and the ‘staretz’ went on walking calmly about the room.

I picked up another glass containing cyanide, filled it with wine and handed it to Rasputin.

He drank it as he had the others, and still with no result.

There remained only one poisoned glass on the tray. Then, as I was feeling desperate, and must try to make him do as I did, I began drinking myself.

A silence fell upon us as we sat facing each other.

He looked at me; there was a malicious expression in his eyes, as if to say: ‘Now, see, you’re wasting your time, you can’t do anything to me.’

Suddenly his expression changed to one of fierce anger; I had never seen him look so terrifying. He fixed his fiendish eyes on me, and at that moment I was filled with such hatred that I wanted to leap at him and strangle him with my bare hands.

The silence became ominous. I had the feeling that he knew why I had brought him to my house, and what I had set out to do. We seemed to be engaged in a strange and terrible struggle. Another moment and I would have been beaten, annihilated. Under Rasputin’s heavy gaze, I felt all my self-possession leaving me; an indescribable numbness came over me, my head swam. . . .

THE YEARS BETWEEN: 1906—MARCH 1917

When I came to myself, he was still seated in the same place, his head in his hands. I could not see his eyes. I had got back my self-control and offered him another cup of tea.

‘Pour me a cup,’ he said in a muffled voice. ‘I’m very thirsty.’ He raised his head, his eyes were dull and I thought he avoided looking at me.

While I poured the tea, he rose and began walking up and down. Catching sight of my guitar which I had left on a chair, he said: ‘Play something cheerful, I like listening to your singing.’

I found it difficult to sing anything at such a moment, especially anything cheerful. ‘I really don’t feel up to it,’ I said. However, I took the guitar and sang a sad Russian ditty.

He sat down and at first listened attentively; then his head drooped and his eyes closed. I thought he was dozing. When I finished the song, he opened his eyes and looked gloomily at me: ‘Sing another. I’m very fond of this kind of music and you put so much soul into it.’

I sang once more but I did not recognize my own voice.

Time went by; the clock said two-thirty . . . the nightmare had lasted two interminable hours. What would happen, I thought, if I had lost my nerve?

Upstairs my friends were evidently growing impatient, to judge by the racket they made. I was afraid that they might be unable to bear the suspense any longer and just come bursting in.

Rasputin raised his head: ‘What’s all that noise?’

‘Probably the guests leaving,’ I answered. ‘I’ll go and see what’s up.’

In my study, Dimitri, Purishkevich and Sukhotin rushed at me, and plied me with questions.

‘Well, have you done it? Is it over?’

‘The poison hasn’t acted,’ I replied.

They stared at me in amazement.

‘It’s impossible!’ cried the Grand Duke.

‘But the dose was enormous! Did he take the whole lot?’ asked the others.

‘Every bit,’ I answered.

After a short discussion, we agreed to go down in a body, throw ourselves on Rasputin and strangle him. We were already on the way down, when I was brought to a halt by the fear that

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

we would ruin the whole scheme by our precipitation: the sudden appearance of a lot of strangers would certainly arouse Rasputin's suspicions. And who could tell what such a diabolical person was capable of doing?

I convinced my friends with great difficulty that it would be best for me to act alone. I took Dimitri's revolver and went back to the basement.

Rasputin sat where I had left him; his head drooping and his breathing laboured. I went up quietly and sat down by him, but he paid no attention to me. After a few minutes of horrible silence, he slowly lifted his head and turned vacant eyes in my direction.

'Are you feeling ill?' I asked.

'Yes, my head is heavy and I've a burning sensation in my stomach. Give me another little glass of wine. It'll do me good.'

I handed home some Madeira; he drank it at a gulp; it revived him and he recovered his spirits. I saw that he was himself again and that his brain was functioning quite normally. Suddenly he suggested that we should go to the gypsies together. I refused, giving the lateness of the hour as an excuse.

'That doesn't matter,' he said. 'They're quite used to that; sometimes they wait up for me all night. I'm often detained at Tsarskoe Selo by important business, or simply to talk about God. . . . When this happens I drive straight to the gypsies in a car. The body, too, needs a rest. . . . Isn't it so? All our thoughts belong to God, they are His, but our bodies belong to ourselves: That's the way it is!' added Rasputin with a wink.

I certainly did not expect to hear such talk from a man who had just swallowed an enormous dose of poison. I was particularly struck by the fact that Rasputin, who had a quite remarkable gift of intuition, should be so far from realizing that he was near death. How was it that his piercing eyes had not noticed that I was holding a revolver behind my back, ready to point it at him?

I turned my head and saw the crystal crucifix. I rose to look at it more closely.

'What are you staring at that crucifix for?' asked Rasputin.

'I like it,' I replied, 'it's so beautiful.'

'It is indeed beautiful,' he said, 'it must have cost a lot. How much did you pay for it?' As he spoke, he took a few steps to-

wards me and, without waiting for an answer, added: 'For my part, I like the cabinet better.' He went up to it, opened it and started to examine it again.

'Gregory Efimovich,' I said, 'you'd far better look at the crucifix and say a prayer.'

Rasputin cast a surprised, almost frightened glance at me. I read in it an expression which I had never known him to have: it was at once gentle and submissive. He came quite close to me and looked me full in the face. It was as though he had at last read something in my eyes, something he had not expected to find. I realized that the hour had come. 'O Lord,' I prayed, 'give me the strength to finish it.'

Rasputin stood before me motionless, his head bent and his eyes on the crucifix. I slowly raised the revolver. Where should I aim, at the temple or at the heart?

A shudder swept over me; my arm grew rigid, I aimed at his heart and pulled the trigger. Rasputin gave a wild scream and crumpled up on the bearskin.

For a moment I was appalled to discover how easy it was to kill a man. A flick of the finger and what had been a living, breathing man only a second before, now lay on the floor like a broken doll.

On hearing the shot my friends rushed in, but in their frantic haste they brushed against the switch and turned out the light. Someone bumped into me and cried out; I stood motionless for fear of treading on the body. At last, someone turned the light on.

Rasputin lay on his back. His features twitched in nervous spasms; his hands were clenched, his eyes closed. A bloodstain was spreading on his silk blouse. A few moments later all movement ceased. We bent over his body to examine it.

The doctor declared that the bullet had struck him in the region of the heart. There was no possibility of doubt: Rasputin was dead. Dimitri and Purishkevich lifted him from the bearskin and laid him on the flag-stones. We turned off the light and went up to my room, after locking the basement door.

Our hearts were full of hope, for we were convinced that what had just taken place would save Russia and the dynasty from ruin and dishonour.

In accordance with our plan, Dimitri, Sukhotin and the doctor

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

were to pretend to take Rasputin back to his house, in case the secret police had followed us without our knowing it. Sukhotin was to pass himself off as the 'staretz' and, wearing Rasputin's overcoat and cap, would drive off in Purishkevich's open car along with Dimitri and the doctor. They were to return to the Moïka in the Grand Duke's closed car, after which they would take the body to Petrovskii Island.

Purishkevich and I remained at the Moïka. While we waited for our friends, we talked of the future of our country, now that it was freed once and for all from its evil genius. How could we foresee that those who ought to have seized this unique opportunity would not have the will, or the skill, to do so?

As we talked I was suddenly filled with a vague misgiving; an irresistible impulse forced me to go down to the basement.

Rasputin lay exactly where we had left him. I felt his pulse: not a beat, he was dead.

Scarcely knowing what I was doing I seized the corpse by the arms and shook it violently. It leaned to one side and fell back. I was just about to go, when I suddenly noticed an almost imperceptible quivering of his left eyelid. I bent over and watched him closely; slight tremors contracted his face.

All of a sudden, I saw the left eye open. . . . A few seconds later his right eyelid began to quiver, then opened. I then saw both eyes—the green eyes of a viper—staring at me with an expression of diabolical hatred. The blood ran cold in my veins. My muscles turned to stone. I wanted to run away, to call for help, but my legs refused to obey me and not a sound came from my throat.

I stood rooted to the flag-stones as if caught in the toils of a nightmare.

Then a terrible thing happened: with a sudden violent effort Rasputin leapt to his feet, foaming at the mouth. A wild roar echoed through the vaulted rooms, and his hands convulsively thrashed the air. He rushed at me, trying to get at my throat, and sank his fingers into my shoulder like steel claws. His eyes were bursting from their sockets, blood oozed from his lips. And all the time he called me by name, in a low, raucous voice.

No words can express the horror I felt. I tried to free myself but was powerless in his vice-like grip. A ferocious struggle began. . . .

This devil who was dying of poison, who had a bullet in his heart, must have been raised from the dead by the powers of evil. There was something appalling and monstrous in his diabolical refusal to die.

I realized now who Rasputin really was. It was the reincarnation of Satan himself who held me in his clutches and would never let me go till my dying day.

By a superhuman effort I succeeded in freeing myself from his grasp.

He fell on his back, gasping horribly and still holding in his hand the epaulette he had torn from my tunic during our struggle. For a while he lay motionless on the ground. Then after a few seconds, he moved. I rushed upstairs and called Purishkevich, who was in my study.

‘Quick, quick, come down!’ I cried. ‘He’s still alive!’

At that moment, I heard a noise behind me; I seized the rubber club Maklakov had given me (he had said: ‘one never knows’) and rushed downstairs, followed by Purishkevich, revolver in hand. We found Rasputin climbing the stairs.

He was crawling on hands and knees, gasping and roaring like a wounded animal. He gave a desperate leap and managed to reach the secret door which led into the courtyard. Knowing that the door was locked, I waited on the landing above grasping my rubber club.

To my horror and amazement, I saw the door open and Rasputin disappear. Purishkevich sprang after him. Two shots echoed through the night. The idea that he might escape was intolerable! Rushing out of the house by the main entrance, I ran along the Moïka to cut him off in case Purishkevich had missed him.

The courtyard had three entrances, but only the middle one was unlocked. Through the iron railings, I could see Rasputin making straight for it.

I heard a third shot, then a fourth. . . . I saw Rasputin totter and fall beside a heap of snow. Purishkevich ran up to him, stood for a few seconds looking at the body, then, having made sure that this time all was over, went swiftly into the house. I called, but he did not hear me.

The quay and the adjacent streets were deserted; apparently the shots had not been heard. When I had reassured myself on this point, I entered the courtyard and went up to the snow-heap

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

behind which lay Rasputin. He gave no sign of life.

But, at that moment, I saw two of my servants running up from one side and a policeman from the other.

I went up to the policeman and spoke to him; I stood so as to make him turn his back to the spot where Rasputin lay.

'Your Highness,' he said on recognizing me, 'I heard revolver shots. What has happened?'

'Nothing of any consequence,' I replied, 'just a little horse-play. I gave a small party this evening and one of my friends who had drunk a little too much amused himself by firing his revolver into the air. If anyone questions you, just say that everything's all right, and that there is no harm done!'

As I spoke, I led him to the gate. I then returned to the corpse by which the two servants were standing. Rasputin's body lay still in a crumpled heap on the same spot, but his position had changed.

My God, I thought, can he still be alive?

I was terror-stricken at the bare thought that he might suddenly get up again. I ran towards the house, calling Purishkevich, who had disappeared indoors. I felt sick, and Rasputin's hollow voice calling my name still rang in my ears. Staggering up to my dressing-room, I drank a glass of water. At that moment Purishkevich entered the room: 'Ah! there you are! I've been looking for you everywhere!' he cried.

My sight was blurred, I thought I was going to faint. Purishkevich helped me to my study. We had scarcely reached it when my manservant came to say that the policeman I had talked to a few moments before wished to see me again. The shots, it seems, had been heard from the police station, and my constable, whose beat it was, had been sent for to make a report on what had happened. As his version of the affair was considered unsatisfactory, the police insisted on fuller details.

When the constable entered the room, Purishkevich addressed him in a loud voice: 'Have you ever heard of Rasputin? The man who plotted to ruin our country, the Tsar and your brother-soldiers? The man who betrayed us to Germany, do you hear?'

Not understanding what was expected of him, the policeman remained silent.

'Do you know who I am?' continued Purishkevich. 'I am Vladimir Mitrophanovich Purishkevich, member of the Duma.'

The shots you heard killed Rasputin. If you love your country and your Tsar, you'll keep your mouth shut.'

I listened with horror to this amazing statement, which came so unexpectedly that I had no chance to interrupt. Purishkevich was in such a state of excitement that he did not realize what he was saying.

Finally, the policeman spoke: 'You did right and I won't say a word unless I'm put on oath. I would then have to tell the truth as it would be a sin to lie.'

Purishkevich followed him out.

My manservant then informed me that Rasputin's body had been placed on the lower landing of the staircase. I felt very ill, my head swam and I could scarcely walk. I rose with difficulty, automatically picked up my rubber club, and left the study.

As I reached the top of the stairs, I saw Rasputin stretched out on the landing, blood flowing from his many wounds. It was a loathsome sight. Suddenly, everything went black, I felt the ground slipping from under my feet and I fell headlong down the stairs.

Purishkevich and Ivan found me a few minutes later, lying side by side with Rasputin; the murderer and his victim. I was unconscious and he and Ivan had to carry me to my bedroom.

Meanwhile Dimitri, Sukhotin and Doctor Lazovert came back in a closed car to fetch Rasputin's body. When Purishkevich told them what had happened, they decided to let me rest and go off without me. They wrapped the corpse in a piece of heavy linen, shoved it into the car, and drove to Petrovskii Island. There, from the top of the bridge, they hurled it into the river.

On regaining consciousness I felt as though I had just recovered from a serious illness. The air I breathed in so deeply seemed fresh, clean and pure, as after a storm. I seemed to come to life again.

With the help of my servant I washed up all traces of blood which might give us away. When everything was in order, I walked out into the courtyard. I had to think of some story to explain the revolver shots. This is what I decided to say: one of my guests while considerably the worse for liquor had tried to shoot one of our watch-dogs in the courtyard when he was leaving.

I then sent for the two servants who had seen the end of the

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

tragedy and explained what had really happened. They listened in silence and promised to keep my secret.

It was almost five in the morning when I left the Moïka to return to the Grand Duke Alexander's palace. I felt full of courage and confidence at the thought that the first steps to save Russia had been taken.

I found my brother-in-law Theodore in my room. He had spent a sleepless night, anxiously waiting for me to come back. 'Thank God you are here at last,' he said. 'Well?'

'Rasputin is dead,' I replied, 'but I'm not in a fit state to talk about it; I am dropping with fatigue.'

Realizing that I would need all my strength on the morrow to face the cross-examinations, the investigations, and perhaps even worse, I went to bed and at once fell into a deep sleep.

The aftermath of the Rasputin affair is described by Princess Paley, the wife of Grand Duke Paul and a fervent admirer of the Royal Family, as we shall have occasion to note later on:

The Empress persuaded the Emperor to punish severely those who were guilty [for Rasputin's death]; but Felix Yusupov, who bore most of the guilt, exiled himself in one of his country estates, whilst Grand Duke Dimitri was ordered to leave for Persia. . . . Until his departure Grand Duke Dimitri was kept under arrest in his Petrograd palace, and he was neither allowed to receive anyone nor to go out. During the night of January 5th he left without anyone, even his father, being able to kiss him goodbye.

There was great excitement in the Imperial Family and in Petrograd. The family decided to present a petition to the Emperor, asking him not to punish Grand Duke Dimitri too severely and not to exile him to Persia in view of his delicate health.

I drew up the text of the petition. At the time this exile seemed too cruel for words, but God willed that Dimitri's valuable life should be saved in this way, because those [of the Imperial Family] who stayed in Russia perished at the hands of the Bolshevik monsters in 1918 and 1919.

The petition was signed by Queen Olga of Greece, the grandmother of Dimitri, by Grand Duke Paul [Princess Paley's hus-

band] and all the members of the Imperial Family. When the Emperor had read the document he wrote in the margin: 'No one has the right to kill, and I am amazed that the family should address such demands to me. Signed: Nicholas.' And he sent the petition back to Grand Duke Paul. This historic document was in my house at Tsarskoe Selo when the bandits seized it. I do not know what has become of it.

*

When Rasputin's body had been found, the Empress ordered that it should be brought to Shchesmenskaia Bogadelna . . . between Petrograd and Tsarskoe, where the corpse was embalmed and placed in a lighted chapel. Madame Virubov and other feminine admirers of Rasputin held services round the body. The Empress came with her daughters and prayed and cried for a long time. On Rasputin's breast she put a small ikon, which had been signed on the back by each of them: Alexandra, Olga, Tatiana, Maria, Anastasia and Anne (Madame Viburov). Later on, after the Revolution, when Rasputin's body was disinterred, burnt, and his ashes scattered to the wind, an American collector bought this ikon for a large sum of money. It is strange to think that this strange and mystical being passed through the four elements: water, earth, fire and wind.

Three days afterwards, at 3 a.m., Rasputin was buried in the park at Tsarskoe, near the arsenal and not far from the Aleksandrovskaja station. The coffin was carried by the Emperor, Protopopov, General Voekov and an officer called Maltsov. The Empress was weighed down with grief. So ended this drama, which so many people looked upon as a deliverance for the country, but which was only the prelude to the most terrible tragedy.

By January 1917 revolution was in the air. At a dinner party at the British Embassy a Russian friend of the Ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, told him that either the unpopular Empress or both she and Nicholas would certainly be killed. Buchanan had a personal affection for the Tsar, and also considered it his duty to do what little he could to ensure a stable Russia as England's ally in the war. He asked for a private audience with Nicholas and was granted one:

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

On January 12th—the day eventually fixed—I proceeded to Tsarskoe in a special train, accompanied by one of the Imperial chamberlains, and was on arrival shown into one of the large reception rooms, where I remained some little time in conversation with several of the high officers of the Court. As I was looking out of one of the windows I saw the Emperor leaving the palace and taking a brisk walk in the snow, as was often his habit between audiences. On his return, some ten minutes later, I was conducted to his presence. On all previous occasions His Majesty had received me informally in his study, and, after asking me to sit down, had produced his cigarette case and asked me to smoke. I was, therefore, disagreeably surprised at being ushered this time into the audience chamber and at finding His Majesty awaiting me there, standing in the middle of the room. I at once realized that he had divined the object of my audience, and that he was purposely giving it a strictly official character as a hint to me not to touch on matters outside an Ambassador's province. My heart, I confess, sank within me, and for a moment I seriously contemplated renouncing my original purpose. In these democratic days, when Emperors and Kings are at a discount, such nervousness on my part may seem out of place. But the Emperor of all the Russias was then an autocrat, whose slightest wish was law; and I was about not only to disregard the hint which he had so plainly given me, but to put myself in the wrong by overstepping the bounds of Ambassador's sphere of action.

His Majesty began the conversation by expressing the deep regret with which he had that morning received the news of the death of Count Benckendorff, who had done so much to promote Anglo-Russian friendship. He would, he said, be very difficult to replace; but he mentioned Sazonov, whose appointment was announced a few weeks later, as an Ambassador likely to prove agreeable to His Majesty's Government. Speaking next of the importance of the Allied Conference that was about to meet at Petrograd, His Majesty expressed the hope that it would be the last one which we should have to hold before the final peace conference. I replied that I saw but little chance of its proving to be the precursor of the peace conference, as the political situation in Russia did not encourage me to expect any great results from its deliberations. I could not, indeed, help asking myself whether, under present circumstances, it was worth while exposing the

lives of so many distinguished men to the fate that had befallen Lord Kitchener on his ill-starred journey to Russia.

On His Majesty asking why I took so pessimistic a view of the conference's prospects, I said that, even if it succeeded in establishing closer co-ordination between the Allied Governments, we had no guarantee that the present Russian Government would remain in office or that the decisions of the conference would be respected by their successors. As His Majesty protested that such apprehensions were unfounded, I explained that co-ordination of our efforts would not suffice unless there was in each of the Allied countries complete solidarity between all classes of the population. We had recognized this fact in England, and it was to secure the collaboration of the working classes that Mr Lloyd George had included a representative of Labour in his small War Cabinet. In Russia it was very different, and His Majesty, I feared, did not realize how important it was that we should present a united front to the enemy, not only collectively as allies, but individually as nations. 'But I and my people,' interjected the Emperor, 'are united in our determination to win the war.' 'But not,' I replied, 'as regards the competence of the men whom Your Majesty has entrusted with the conduct of the war. Does Your Majesty,' I asked, 'wish me to speak with my usual frankness?'

On the Emperor signifying his assent, I went on to say that there was now a barrier between him and his people, and that if Russia was still united as a nation it was in opposing his present policy. The people, who had rallied so splendidly round their Sovereign on the outbreak of war, had seen how hundreds of thousands of lives had been sacrificed on account of the lack of rifles and munitions; how, owing to the incompetence of the administration, there had been a severe food crisis, and—much to my surprise, the Emperor himself added, 'a breakdown of the railways'. All that they wanted, I continued, was a Government that would carry on the war to a victorious finish. The Duma, I had reason to know, would be satisfied if His Majesty would but appoint as President of the Council a man in whom both he and the nation could have confidence, and would allow him to choose his own colleagues. The Emperor, while passing over this suggestion, referred by way of justification to certain changes which he had recently made in the Ministry. I therefore ventured to

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

observe that His Majesty had of late changed his Ministers so often that Ambassadors never knew whether the Ministers of today with whom they were treating would still be Ministers on the morrow.

'Your Majesty, if I may be permitted to say so, has but one safe course open to you—namely, to break down the barrier that separates you from your people and to regain their confidence.' Drawing himself up and looking hard at me, the Emperor asked: 'Do you mean that I am to regain the confidence of my people or that they are to regain *my* confidence?' 'Both, sir,' I replied, 'for without such mutual confidence Russia will never win this war. Your Majesty was admirably inspired when you went to the Duma last February. Will you not go there again? Will you not speak to your people? Will you not tell them that Your Majesty, who is the father of your people, wishes to work with them to win the war? You have, sir, but to lift your little finger, and they will once more kneel at your feet as I saw them kneel, after the outbreak of war, at Moscow.'

I had in the course of our conversation referred to the necessity of having a strong man at the head of the Government, and the Emperor now seized on this remark, saying that the situation undoubtedly required firmness and a strong man to deal with it. I told His Majesty that I entirely agreed, provided always that that firmness was not applied to enforce repressive measures or to obstruct the admirable work being done by the *zemstvos*. While expressing his appreciation of the services rendered by the *zemstvos* during the war, the Emperor said that he disapproved of the attitude and political speeches of some of their leaders. I tried to defend them on the ground that if they had erred it was through excess of patriotism, but without much success.

I next called His Majesty's attention to the attempts made by the Germans, not only to create dissension between the Allies, but to estrange him from his people. Their agents, I said, were everywhere at work. They were pulling the strings, and were using as their unconscious tools those who were in the habit of advising His Majesty as to the choice of his Ministers. They indirectly influenced the Empress through those in her *entourage*, with the result that, instead of being loved, as she ought to be, Her Majesty was discredited and accused of working in German interests. The Emperor once drew himself up and said: 'I

choose my Ministers myself, and do not allow anyone to influence my choice.' 'How, then,' I ventured to ask, 'does Your Majesty select them?' 'By making inquiries,' His Majesty replied, 'as to the qualifications of those whom I consider most fitted to conduct the affairs of the different Ministries.' 'Your Majesty's inquiries,' I rejoined, 'are not, I fear, always attended with success. There is, for example, Mr Protopopov, who, if Your Majesty will forgive my saying so, is bringing Russia to the verge of ruin. So long as he remains Minister of the Interior there cannot be that collaboration between the Government and the Duma which is an essential condition of victory.'

'I chose Mr Protopopov,' the Emperor here interposed, 'from the ranks of the Duma in order to be agreeable to them—and this is my reward!' 'But, sir,' I said, 'the Duma can hardly place confidence in a man who has betrayed his party for office, who has had an interview with a German agent at Stockholm, and who is suspected of working for a reconciliation with Germany.' 'Mr Protopopov,' His Majesty declared, 'is not a pro-German, and the reports circulated about his Stockholm interview have been grossly exaggerated.' 'I was not,' I replied, 'acquainted with what had passed in that interview. But, even admitting that the charges brought against him on that count had been exaggerated, he had told a deliberate falsehood in announcing in the Press that it was at the special request of the Russian Ministers at Stockholm that he had seen the German in question.' The Emperor did not attempt to deny this.

Did His Majesty, I then asked, realize the dangers of the situation, and was he aware that revolutionary language was being held, not only in Petrograd, but throughout Russia? On the Emperor saying that he was quite aware that people were indulging in such talk, but that I made a mistake in taking it too seriously, I told him that a week before Rasputin's assassination I had heard that an attempt was about to be made on his life. I had treated this report as idle gossip, but it had, after all, proved true. I could not, therefore, now turn a deaf ear to the reports which had reached me of assassinations, said to be contemplated of certain exalted personages. If such assassinations once began, there was no saying where they would stop. Repressive measures would, no doubt, be taken, and the Duma would be dissolved. Were that to happen, I should abandon all hope of Russia.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

‘Your Majesty,’ I concluded, ‘must remember that the people and the army are but one, and that in the event of revolution only a small portion of the army can be counted on to defend the dynasty. An Ambassador, I am well aware, has no right to hold the language which I have held to Your Majesty, and I had to take my courage in both hands before speaking as I have done. I can but plead as my excuse the fact that I have throughout been inspired by my feelings of devotion for Your Majesty and the Empress. If I were to see a friend walking through a wood on a dark night along a path which I knew ended in a precipice, would it not be my duty, sir, to warn him of his danger? And is it not equally my duty to warn Your Majesty of the abyss that lies ahead of you? You have, sir, come to the parting of the ways, and you have now to choose between two paths. The one will lead you to victory and a glorious peace—the other to revolution and disaster. Let me implore Your Majesty to choose the former. By following it you will, sir, secure for your country the realization of its secular ambitions and for yourself the position of the most powerful Sovereign in Europe. But above all else, Your Majesty will assure the safety of those who are so dear to you and be free from all anxiety on their account.’

The Emperor was visibly moved by the warmth which I had put into this appeal, and, pressing my hand as he bade me good-bye, said, ‘I thank you, Sir George.’

Princess Paley disliked the British Ambassador and was, moreover, suspicious by nature. After Sir George Buchanan’s secret audience with the Tsar she spread the rumour among court circles that he had been snubbed and therefore subsequently took a leading part in engineering Nicholas’s downfall. Buchanan refuted this rather absurd accusation in his memoirs:

Princess Paley, unlike my other critics, has rendered me one service for which I am grateful. I have often wondered what was the motive that prompted me to start the Russian Revolution, and she is good enough to tell me. The Emperor did not like me—he had received me at my last audience standing—he had never offered me a chair. What more natural that after such treatment I should, *pour assouvir mes rancunes personnelles*, try to bring about a palace revolution with the object of placing Grand Duke

THE YEARS BETWEEN: 1906—MARCH 1917

Cyril on the throne, and that, on finding this impracticable, I should have *lâché* the Grand Duke and gone in for a revolution from below? I had hitherto been under the impression that, in spite of my outspoken language, the Emperor rather liked me—but I was evidently mistaken. Princess Paley was on such intimate terms with him that His Majesty would doubtless have confided to her his likes and dislikes as regarded the Ambassadors accredited to him. But what the Princess does not know is that, no matter what the Emperor may have thought of me, I was personally devoted to him, and it was the fear of the consequences of a possible palace revolution that made me warn him of the danger in which he stood of assassination.

The Tsar was not lacking in wise advisers in the last months of his reign. His cousin and brother-in-law, Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich, added his word to that of Buchanan during this same period. He too dwells on the errors of the hated Protopopov:

January 7, 1917

Dear Nicky:

On January 4th, you were pleased to allow me to express my opinion on a certain subject, and I had to touch, at the same time, upon nearly all the subjects that disturb us. I begged permission to speak as frankly as at the confessional, and you granted it.

I take it that, since I have said so much, I am bound to say more. You may unconsciously have thought, while listening to me: 'It is easy for him to talk, but how about me, who must see my way through the existing chaos, and make decisions on the various measures that are being suggested to me from all sides.'

You should understand that I, like all who are grieved by the whole course of events, often ask myself what I would do in your place, and so I want to let you know what my heart suggests, since I am convinced that it speaks rightly.

We are going through the most dangerous moment in the history of Russia: the question is, shall Russia be a great State, free, and capable of developing and growing strong, or shall she submit to the iron German fist? Everyone feels this—one with his mind, the next with his heart, still others with their souls—

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

and this is the reason everyone, with the exception of the cowards and the enemies of their country, offers up his life and all his possessions.

And at this solemn time, when we are, as it were, being tested as men, in the highest sense—as Christians—certain forces within Russia are leading you, and consequently Russia, to inevitable ruin. I say deliberately, You and Russia, because Russia cannot exist without a Tsar; but it must be remembered that the Tsar alone cannot govern a country like Russia. This should be realized once and for all and, therefore, it is absolutely indispensable that the Ministries and the legislative chambers should work together. I say legislative chambers because, although the existing organs are far from perfect and are not responsible, they ought to be responsible and should bear the whole burden of responsibility before the people. The existing situation, with the whole responsibility resting on you, and you alone, is unthinkable.

What do the people and the public want? Very little: an authority (I am not using hackneyed, meaningless words) that is firm, a strong authority (for a weak authority is no authority), a wise one, meeting the popular needs—and the opportunity to live freely and to let others live freely.

A wise authority should be composed of persons who are, in the very first place, clean, liberal and devoted to the monarchist principle—by no means those of the right, or worse yet, the extreme right, because for this kind of person ‘authority’ means to ‘govern’ with the aid of the police, to give the public no opportunity for free development, and to grant liberties to our, in most cases, good-for-nothing clergy. The President of the Council of Ministers should be a person in whom you have absolute confidence. He selects and is responsible for all the other Ministers, and they, all together, represent a single purpose, one mind and one will, while each, in his special field, promotes the common policy and not his own, as is the case now. No Minister should have the right to give you his opinions as to general policy; he should merely report in his own special, narrow field. However, if you wish to know his opinions as to general problems, he may express them but only in the Council of Ministers, with you personally in the chair. With a united Ministry, it is unlikely that you would hear any contradictory opinions, but, of course, there might be various shades of opinion, in connection with the

work entrusted to each of them separately, and it is necessary for you to hear them.

In principle, I am opposed to a so-called responsible Ministry, i.e. responsible to the Duma. This should not be permitted. It must be remembered that in our country, parliamentary life is in an embryonic stage. With the best of intentions, ambition for power, fame and position would play not a minor, but a major, part, especially where the parliamentary régime is not clearly understood, and individual envy and other human frailties would cause even more changes of Ministers than now, though this may be hard to imagine.

The President, as well as all the Ministers, should be chosen from persons who enjoy the confidence of the country, and whose activities are known everywhere. Of course, this does not exclude members of the Duma. Such a Ministry would meet with general sympathy in all well-disposed circles. It should present to you a detailed programme of those measures which are necessary to the principal task of the present, i.e. victory over the Germans, and should include such reforms as can be introduced at the same time, without harm to the main object, and for which the country is waiting.

This programme, being approved by you, would have to be submitted to the Duma and the State Council, which, without doubt, would approve it and give it their full support, without which the work of the Government is impossible. Then, when you are supported by the chambers, and have gained a firm foothold and a feeling that the country is behind you, all movements by the left elements of the Duma should be suppressed. I have no doubt that the Duma itself would manage this; but if not, the Duma would have to be dissolved, and such a dissolution of the Duma would be acclaimed by the country.

The main principle is that the programme, once established, shall in no case be altered, and the Government shall feel confident that no outside influences can sway you, with all your unlimited power, and that you will support your own Government. At present, we see the exact reverse. No Minister knows what tomorrow may bring forth. They are all isolated. Outside people, who enjoy no confidence whatever, are appointed as Ministers, while they themselves probably wonder how they ever came to be named. But since, generally speaking, there are not

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

many honest people, these persons lack the courage to admit to you that they are unfitted for the positions to which they are appointed and that their appointments only hurt the general good. Their actions border on the criminal.

January 14, 1917

I wrote the first part of this letter in the car, on the way to Kiev. Until today I have been so busy that I had not a minute to spare.

The appointments made since then show that you have definitely resolved to pursue a domestic policy that runs absolutely against the wishes of all your faithful subjects. This policy only plays into the hands of the left elements, who look on the situation as 'the worse, the better'. The unrest grows; even the monarchist principle is beginning to totter; and those who defend the idea that Russia cannot exist without a Tsar lose the ground under their feet, since the facts of disorganization and lawlessness are manifest. A situation like this cannot last long. I repeat once more—it is impossible to rule the country without paying attention to the voice of the people, without meeting their needs, without considering them capable of entertaining opinions of their own, without a willingness to admit that the people themselves understand their own needs. . . .

You could in a few words, by a stroke of the pen, quiet everyone and give the country what she wants; a Ministry of confidence, and the public organization the opportunity to develop, under control, to be sure. If you were to do that, the Duma would, like one man, stand behind such a Government; there would be a tremendous enthusiasm; all the nation's forces would come to the front; and the victory would be won. It is painful to feel that there are no men whom you trust, men who understand the situation, but only those who insinuate themselves into positions they know nothing about.

February 7, 1917

As you see, a month has passed and still I have not mailed my letter—I have been hoping all the while that you would follow the road pointed out to you by people who are loyal to you and who love Russia from the bottom of their hearts. Events show, however, that your counsellors are still leading Russia and you to sure perdition. To keep silent under the circumstances is a

crime against God, against you, and against Russia.

Disaffection is spreading very fast and the gulf between you and your people is growing wider. (When I say 'people' I mean those who understand the wants of the nation, and not those who represent a mere herd that will follow the man who knows how to sway a crowd.) People love you and believe firmly that complete victory and domestic reorganization are possible without any upheavals with a Government composed of men who are clean and enjoy the confidence of the country. Without this, there is no hope of saving the throne and, with it, our native land.

Look at what is happening among our Allies. They have summoned the most capable men, irrespective of their convictions, to help govern their countries. Everyone realizes that, at a moment when the fate of the world is at stake, and when their very existence as free States depends upon a victorious issue of the war, there can be no room for personal feelings or for considering the interests of this or that party. There is only one thing to do—to summon the more capable people to work for the salvation of their country, yes, the salvation of the country, for it is a question of the very existence of Russia as a great, powerful State.

Actually, in the whole history of the Russian State, there have never been more favourable political conditions. We have on our side our ancient enemy, England, our recent enemy, Japan, and all the other States which appreciate all our power and at the same time witness the wholly inexplicable spectacle of our complete domestic chaos, which grows worse every day. They see that it is not the best but the worst elements who are ruling Russia at the moment when mistakes committed today will affect our whole history, and they are compelled to begin to have some doubts about us. They see that Russia does not understand her own interests and problems, i.e., of course, not Russia, but those who rule her.

Such a situation cannot last. You have probably read the address presented to you by the Novgorod nobility. One speaks in this fashion only when deeply conscious of the abyss on which we are standing, and I assure you that all persons really loyal to you feel exactly the same way.

One is in utter despair at seeing that you do not want to hear

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

those who know Russia's situation and counsel you to take the steps that would extricate us from the chaos we are in today.

You probably believe that the measures the Government has taken will lead Russia out to the bright path, the path to victory and complete regeneration, and you assume that all of us with the opposite view are wrong. But, to test it, just glance behind you, and compare the situation in Russia at the beginning of the war with that of today. Is it possible that such a comparison does not convince you as to which side is right?

In conclusion I want to say that, strange though it may be, the Government itself is the organ that is preparing the Revolution. The nation does not want it, but the Government is doing everything to make as many malcontents as possible, and is succeeding perfectly. We are witnessing the unparalleled spectacle of revolution from above, and not from below.

Your faithful

February 17, 1917.

SANDRO.

Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich genuinely tried to help the Tsar, but other members of the Royal Family were not so benevolent. The Vladimir branch had sketchy designs for replacing the Tsar by his son. A regency would follow, with either Grand Duke Nicholas or the Tsar's brother Michael as regent. Very late one night during this period, Rodzianko received a telephone call from the Grand Duchess of the Vladimir branch asking him to come and see her immediately. Rodzianko postponed the meeting until the following day since he rightly considered that secret interviews at dead of night with members of the Royal Family who were known to be hostile to the Tsar would reflect on his position:

On my arrival next day I found the Grand Duchess and her sons, as if assembled for a family council. They were all most cordial to me, and not a word was said about the 'urgent matter'. At last we passed into the Grand Duchess's boudoir, the conversation still revolving round trivial topics. Cyril Vladimirovich, turning to his mother, said: 'Why don't you speak?'

The Grand Duchess then began to talk of the general state of affairs, of the Government's incompetence, of Protopopov and of the Empress. On mentioning the latter's name she became more

THE YEARS BETWEEN: 1906—MARCH 1917

and more excited, dwelt on her pernicious influence and interference in everything, and said she was driving the country to destruction; that she was the cause of the danger which threatened the Emperor and the rest of the imperial family; that such conditions could no longer be tolerated; that things must be changed, something must be done, removed, destroyed. . . .

Wishing to understand more precisely what she was driving at, I asked:

‘What do you mean by “removed”?’

‘Well, I don’t know. . . . Some attempt must be made. . . . The Duma must do something. . . . She must be annihilated. . . .’

‘Who?’

‘The Empress.’

‘Your Highness,’ said I, ‘allow me to treat this conversation as if it had never taken place, because if you address me as the President of the Duma, my oath of allegiance compels me to wait at once on His Imperial Majesty and report to him that Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna has declared to me that the Empress must be annihilated.’

The half-hearted attempts of the Grand Dukes to oust the Tsar were soon to be swiftly overtaken by the wishes of the mob. Nicholas was to be compelled to abdicate in March 1917.

CHAPTER III

THE MARCH DAYS

The Revolution of 1917, which, as we have seen, had been brewing for some time, finally broke out on March 8th, the day on which Nicholas II left Petrograd again for the front. At the start it was far less dramatic than the uprising of 1905 or the Potemkin mutiny. It was not directly inspired by the revolutionary leaders; Lenin, for instance, was still in exile. The masses moved spontaneously. On March 8th, chosen as 'Women's Day', columns of strikers advanced through the streets of Petrograd shouting 'Give us bread' and attacking the bakeries. The disorders continued on the following day, and instead of charging into the crowds as they were ordered, the Cossacks rode through them at a more gentle speed and even fraternized with the strikers.

Here is Trotsky musing on the significance of these events. He was prevented from arriving in Russia to spur on the Revolution until May 17th. This explains in part his dry, theoretical approach to the March Days:

How scant are the records of the mass fighting in the March days—scant even in comparison with the slim records of the November fights. In November the party directed the insurrection from day to day; in its articles, proclamations and reports, at least the external continuity of the struggle is recorded. Not so in March. The masses had almost no leadership from above. The newspapers were silenced by the strike. Without a look back, the masses made their own history. To reconstruct a living picture of the things that happened in the streets, is almost unthinkable. It would be well if we could recreate at least the general continuity and inner order of events.

*

. . . the March Revolution was begun from below, overcoming the resistance of its own revolutionary organizations, the initiative being taken of their own accord by the most oppressed and

THE MARCH DAYS

downtrodden part of the proletariat—the women textile workers, among them no doubt many soldiers' wives. The overgrown bread-lines had provided the last stimulus. About 90,000 workers, men and women, were on strike that day (March 8th). The fighting mood expressed itself in demonstrations, meetings, encounters with the police. The movement began in the Vyborg district, with its large industrial establishments; then it crossed over to the Petersburg side. There were no strikes or demonstrations elsewhere, according to the testimony of the secret police. On that day detachments of troops were called in to assist the police—evidently not many of them—but there were no encounters with them. A mass of women, not all of them workers, flocked to the municipal Duma demanding bread. It was like demanding milk from a he-goat. Red banners appeared in different parts of the city, and inscriptions on them showed that the workers wanted bread, but neither autocracy nor war. Women's Day passed successfully, with enthusiasm and without victims. But what it concealed in itself, no one had guessed even by nightfall.

On the following day the movement not only fails to diminish, but doubles. About one half of the industrial workers of Petrograd are on strike on March 9th. The workers come to the factories in the morning; instead of going to work, they hold meetings; then begins the procession toward the centre. . . .

Throughout the entire day, crowds of people poured from one part of the city to another. They were persistently dispelled by the police, stopped and crowded back by cavalry detachments and occasionally by the infantry. Along with shouts of 'Down with the police!' was heard often a 'Hurrah!' addressed to the Cossacks. That was significant. Toward the police the crowd showed ferocious hatred. They routed the mounted police with whistles, stones and pieces of ice. In a totally different way the workers approached the soldiers. Around the barracks, sentinels, patrols and lines of soldiers, stood groups of working men and women exchanging friendly words with the army men. This was a new stage, due to the growth of the strike and the personal meeting of the worker with the army. Such a stage is inevitable in every revolution. But it always seems new, and does in fact occur differently every time: those who have read and written about it do not recognize the thing when they see it. . . .

It seems that a break in the army first appeared among the Cos-

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

sacks, those age-old subduers and punishers. This does not mean, however, that the Cossacks were more revolutionary than others. On the contrary, these solid property owners, riding their own horses, highly valuing their Cossack peculiarities, scorning the plain peasants, mistrustful of the workers, had many elements of conservatism. But just for this reason the changes caused by the war were more sharply noticeable in them. Besides, they were always being pulled around, sent everywhere, driven against the people, kept in suspense—and they were the first to be put to the test. They were sick of it, and wanted to go home. Therefore they winked: ‘Do it, boys, if you know how—we won’t bother you!’ All these things, however, were merely very significant symptoms. The army was still the army, it was bound with discipline, and the threads were in the hands of the monarchy. The worker mass was unarmed. The leaders had not yet thought of the decisive crisis. . . .

On the 10th, the strike spread wider. According to the Government’s figures, 240,000 workers participated that day. The most backward layers are following up the vanguard. Already a good number of small establishments are on strike. The street-cars are at a stand. Business concerns are closed. In the course of the day students of the higher schools join the strike. By noon, tens of thousands of people pour to the Kazan’ cathedral and the surrounding streets. Attempts are made to organize street meetings: a series of armed encounters with the police occur. Orators address the crowds around the Alexander III monument. The mounted police open fire. A speaker falls wounded. Shots from the crowd kill a police inspector, wound the chief of police and several other policemen. Bottles, petards and hand grenades are thrown at the gendarmes. The war has taught this art. The soldiers show indifference, at times hostility, to the police. It spreads excitedly through the crowd that when the police opened fire by the Alexander III monument, the Cossacks let go a volley at the horse ‘Pharaohs’ (such was the nickname of the police) and the latter had to gallop off. This apparently was not a legend circulated for self-encouragement, since the incident, although in different versions, is confirmed from several sources. . . .

Let us try to get a clearer idea of the inner logic of the movement. On March 8th, under the flag of ‘Women’s Day’, began the long-ripe and long-withheld uprising of the Petrograd work-

THE MARCH DAYS

ing masses. The first step of the insurrection was the strike. In the course of three days it broadened and became practically general. This alone gave assurance to the masses and carried them forward. Becoming more and more aggressive, the strike merged with the demonstrations, which were bringing the revolutionary mass face to face with the troops. This raised the problem as a whole to the higher level where things are solved by force of arms. The first days brought a number of individual successes, but these were more symptomatic than substantial.

A revolutionary uprising that spreads over a number of days can develop victoriously only in case it ascends step by step, and scores one success after another. A pause in its growth is dangerous; a prolonged marking of time, fatal. But even successes by themselves are not enough; the masses must know about them in time, and have time to understand their value. It is possible to let slip a victory at the very moment when it is within arm's reach. This has happened in history.

The first three days were days of uninterrupted increase in the extent and acuteness of the strife. But for this very reason the movement had arrived at a level where mere symptomatic successes were not enough. The entire active mass of the people had come out on the streets. It was settling accounts with the police successfully and easily. In the last two days the troops had been drawn into the events—on the second day, cavalry; on the third, the infantry, too. They barred the way, pushed and crowded back the masses, sometimes connived with them, but almost never resorted to firearms. Those in command were slow to change their plan, partly because they underestimated what was happening—the faulty vision of the reaction supplemented that of the leaders of the Revolution—partly because they lacked confidence in the troops. But exactly on the third day, the force of the developing struggle, as well as the Tsar's command, made it necessary for the Government to send the troops into action in dead earnest. The workers understood this, especially their advance ranks; the dragoons had already done some shooting the day before. Both sides now faced the issue unequivocally.

On March 11th there was a skirmish in front of the Nicholas station and a company of the Volynskii Regiment was ordered to open fire. They fired over the heads of the crowd. 'Such a stage

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

is inevitable in every revolution,' wrote Trotsky. Yet no precise theoretical formula can fit any rebellion, as was shown in the afternoon of the same day, when the soldiers fired directly at the crowd and killed about sixty people.

Perhaps the real climax that denoted the fateful union of worker and soldier came in the night of March 11th-12th. Vasiliev, the Director of the Police, had invited Protopopov, the hated and incompetent Minister of the Interior, to dinner. Vasiliev was sent for at midnight to report to the Cabinet on the measures he had taken to ensure peace and order:

It was three in the morning when I came back home. The Ministers had let me see their anxieties and their discouragement. The feeling of their heavy responsibilities oppressed me, and their nervousness had passed on to me. Crushed with fatigue, I was a long time unable to get to sleep.

At six in the morning the telephone bell woke me sharply; the City Prefect informed me that an NCO of the Volynskii Regiment of the Guard named Kirpichnikov had just killed his superior officer, Training-Captain Lashkevich; the assassin had disappeared and the attitude of the regiment was threatening. The news crushed me; I now saw how far anarchy had infected the barracks. The murder had taken place on military ground; so I could do nothing direct, and called General Kabalov to the telephone. No use; the Governor could not be found, and from the vague answers which were given me, I could not know where he had gone. The NCO Kirpichnikov, who escaped abroad, has later naïvely confessed that he fled without knowing whether an hour later he would be a national hero or hanged. This remark is a picture of the situation; no one in Petrograd had then the least idea of the turn which events would take.

Through my window I could see an unusual excitement in the street. Soon there passed hurrying military cars; in the distance shots resounded. The telephone rang again, and again the City Prefect gave me bad news; Brigadier-General Dobrovolskii, commanding a battalion of sappers of the Guard, had been killed by his men. Then events moved fast; the Volynskii Regiment, which had risen after the murder of Captain Lashkevich, had chased its officers out of the barracks. The mutineers joined the Preobrazhenskii and Lithuanian Regiments of the Guard, whose barracks

THE MARCH DAYS

were near their own. They had succeeded in taking the Arsenal on the Liteinyi. Soldiers were dashing about the streets armed with guns and machine-guns. A roaring crowd invaded the quarters of the prison of preliminary confinement (before trial) and opened the cells; soon it was the same in all the prisons of the city. The police stations of the various wards were carried by the mob. Policemen who were not able to change into mufti were torn to pieces. The fire finished off the rest. Most of this took place in the Liteinyi quarter. I was told on the telephone that the criminals freed by the mutineers had set fire to the offices of the Regional Assize Court of Petrograd; this meant an irreparable loss and the destruction of archives which could not be replaced.

There could no longer be any doubt; the situation was extremely serious. Petrograd had for several days been in the hands of the military authorities, who proved powerless to prevent the murder of officers by the revolutionary troops and to overcome the insurrection. The sequel proved this only too clearly. The mutinous troops disarmed their officers; any resistance meant death. One detachment of engineers, which had remained faithful and was doing all it could to resist the mutineers, was crushed. The insurgents succeeded in seizing the Officers' School on the Kirochnaia and disarming its occupants. Their number increased under one's eyes. The mob was rushing to the centre of the town, not to miss so fine an opportunity for plunder.

The bridge connecting the Liteinyi quarter with the Vyborg quarter to the north of the Neva was held for some time by police officers armed with machine-guns, but soon they were overwhelmed by numbers. The crowd rushed on the barracks of the Moscow Regiment of the Guard. Some detachments resisted, arms in hand. They were soon overflowed and the Moscow Regiment joined in the revolt.

I was preparing to go to my office and try to see Protopopov, who lived in the main building. As I was getting ready to start, a courier came up and told me that a sharp fusillade made the Liteinyi Prospekt impracticable. The police were making a last effort to prevent the insurgents from crossing the bridge. The courier begged me not to risk my life uselessly and wait till things were quiet again.

The only thing left to me was to get into telephonic communication with the (Police) Department. My secretary told me they

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

were going on working as usual in the office, though not without great nervousness. As I had several reasons to fear an assault by the insurgents, I gave orders to send all the staff away. My orders came just in time. A little later my secretary rang me up and told me that a furious crowd had made its way into the building. I at once gave orders to burn the books with the personal addresses of the employees and secret agents. As I learned later, the 'free people' had ransacked all the offices. Some of the leaders had tried, no doubt out of personal interest, to find the section of identification of criminals. All the records, photographs, fingerprint albums relating to ordinary criminals, thieves, swindlers and murderers were thrown out into the court and solemnly burnt. The insurgents also forced my tills and appropriated the sum of 25,000 roubles of public money. From the Police Department the crowd made its way to the quarters of Protopopov and sacked them. Afterwards, according to eye-witnesses, cloaked women of respectable appearance came out of the Minister's flat carrying objects of value. I pass over the innumerable telephone calls which I received in the hours that followed. The Moscow authorities wanted at all costs to know what was happening in Petrograd. I replied to Colonel Martynov, chief of the Okhrana [*the secret police*], that a serious mutiny had broken out and I would do my best to keep him informed. The disorder was so great on all sides that neither the insurgents nor the military authorities thought of occupying the telephone exchange. It continued to work normally, maintaining a perfect neutrality and thus allowing both the representatives of order and the revolutionary leaders to co-ordinate their action. Still, it was not long before the employees abandoned their work to get off home as soon as possible, and it became more and more difficult to get a connection. In the end the direct line through to the Winter Palace was interrupted. After that I could not ring up the Okhrana.

I was also surprised to get a telephone call from Protopopov, who had taken refuge at the Marian Palace. I gave him in a few words a rough sketch of the situation, adding that the military authorities appeared absolutely powerless, as the troops were making common cause with the insurgents.

I soon left my quarters, accompanied by my wife and my friend, Gvozdev. To tell the truth, I did not know where to go, though

THE MARCH DAYS

I had on me a passport for abroad under a borrowed name. I thought for a moment of joining my brother who lived in the Astoria Hotel; on reflection I did not do so, and the event proved I was right. The hotel was about to be occupied by the insurgents. I then went to a friend, an engineer named A—, who lived near the hotel. We were well received. All the same, it was impossible to think of sleeping. Rifle and machine-gun fire was raging. Heavy lorries, crammed with armed men, were dashing through the streets. We passed a very restless night.

On the morning of March 12th, Vasil Vitalevich Shulgin, a Liberal member of the Duma, was rudely awakened by another member, Shingarev. Together they made their way to the seat of the Duma, the Tauride Palace. Shulgin was a scholarly gentleman of the old school, unused to the ways of the mob and the approach of disorder in his organized life. But on this morning he hurriedly agreed with the other members of the Duma to form a Provisional Committee which was to bide its time until the Tsar had decided upon the action that should be taken to deal with the Revolution:

I awoke. It was nine in the morning. The telephone rang and rang.

‘Hello!’

‘Is that you, Vasil Vitalevich?’ asked Shingarev. ‘It is time to go to the Duma. It has begun.’

‘What are you talking about?’

‘It has begun. There is an order to disarm the Duma, the city is in an uproar. Let’s hurry. They are occupying the bridges. We may never get there. An automobile has been sent for me. Come at once to my place, and we will go together.’

‘I am coming.’

This happened on the morning of March 12, 1917. During the last few days we have been living, as it were, on a volcano. Petrograd was without bread—transportation had broken down because of the unusually heavy snows, frosts and principally, of course, the war. There were street disturbances. It was not, of course, a question of bread. It was the last straw. The trouble was that in that large city it was impossible to find a few hundred people who felt kindly toward the Government. That’s not all.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The Government did not feel very kindly toward itself. There was not a single Minister who believed in himself or in what he was doing. . . . There was not one who could bang his fist on the table. . . . Lately the Ministers even stopped coming to the Duma. . . .

As we were driving, Shingarev said: 'That's the answer. Until the last I continued to hope that they would somehow see the light and make concessions. But no; they dismissed the Duma. That was the last opportunity. Any agreement with the Duma, no matter what kind, was the last chance to escape revolution.'

'Do you think this is the beginning of a revolution?'

'It looks like it.'

'Then this is the end.'

'Perhaps the end. Perhaps the beginning.'

'No, but I cannot believe this. If it is revolution then it is the end.'

'You may be right. Unless we believe in miracles—but there may be a miracle. In any case, the Duma stood between the Government and the Revolution. If the Duma is brushed aside then we are face to face with the street. If we could have held on two months longer.'

'Until the offensive?'

'Yes. Had the offensive failed we should have had a revolution anyway . . . had it succeeded. . . .'

'Yes, had it succeeded all would have been forgotten.'

We reached Kamenostrovskii Boulevard. Though it was early for Petrograd yet, the streets were full of people. It gave the impression that the factories were on strike. Perhaps also the high schools and, who knows, the universities. As we approached the Neva the crowd increased and finally became so thick that the automobile came to a standstill.

'Automobile, go back: there is no passage!' Shingarev put his head out of the window and said: 'We are members of the Duma. Let us pass, we must get there.'

A student ran to the window. 'Are you Mr Shingarev?'

'Yes, I am Shingarev. Let us pass.'

'Immediately.'

He jumped on the foot-board. 'Comrades, make way! These are members of the State Duma—Comrade Shingarev.' The

THE MARCH DAYS

crowd opened up and we moved on, with the student still on the foot-board. He kept shouting that 'Comrade Shingarev' was in the car, and we got through. At times the mob shouted back: 'Hurrah for Comrade Shingarev.' The student accompanied us for a short time only, until we came to the Troitskii Bridge. Here the road was blocked by a company of soldiers.

'You tell them,' said the student, 'that you are going to the Duma,' and with those words he disappeared. In his place appeared an officer, and when he learned who we were he very politely apologized for the delay.

'Open up. These are members of the Duma.' As we hurried across the deserted bridge, Shingarev remarked: 'The Duma still stands between the "people" and the "Government"'. So far both banks of the Neva recognize her.' [*On the left bank, the Vyborg side, were the factories, the workmen's quarters, and on the right, the stores, banks, palaces, and the Duma.*]

On this bank [*the right*] all was as yet quiet. We hurried along the quay, but all the familiar places looked queer. . . . On the Shpalernaia we came up with a funeral procession. It was the funeral of M. M. Alekeseenko, member of the Duma; to pity or to envy him?

Others came to the Duma. One told the others the news. 'The workmen have assembled on the Vyborg side. Their headquarters are, seemingly, the station. Some kind of an election is going on . . . hands are raised. A regiment has revolted. Apparently the Volynskii. They killed their commanding officer. The Cossacks have refused to shoot—they fraternize with the people. There are barricades on the Nevskii. No one knows anything about the fate of the Ministers. It is said that the police are being murdered. . . . It was reported that a mob of about thirty thousand people, made up of workmen, soldiers and "all kinds", is on the way to the State Duma.'

An emergency meeting of the Duma was held in President Rodzianko's office. Indecision prevailed. Members wanted to know whether the Duma was on the side of the old Government or on that of the people. Their demand was left hanging in the air.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Just then there was a commotion at the door, loud voices . . . and an officer rushed into the room.

He interrupted the meeting with his loud, shrill voice: 'Gentlemen of the Duma, I implore your protection! I am the head of the guard, your guard, the guard of the Duma. Some unknown soldiers have forced their way in. They have severely wounded my assistant. They tried to kill me. I barely escaped. . . . Help me!'

Rodzianko tried to pacify him, to tell him that he was in no danger.

At this moment Kerensky spoke up: 'That which has just happened proves that we must not delay! I am constantly receiving information that the troops are agitated. . . . They are coming out on the street. . . . I am now going to visit the regiments. It is necessary that I should know what to say to them. May I tell them that the State Duma is with them, that it assumes all responsibility, that it will stand at the head of the movement?'

I do not recall whether he received an answer . . . probably not, but from that minute his figure stood out. He spoke with positiveness as one having authority. His words and gestures were sharp, to the point, his eyes flashed. . . .

'He is their dictator,' I heard a whisper near me.

It was at this time, or perhaps a little before that, that I asked to be allowed to say a word. I had the feeling that we were going down, down . . . and unconsciously prepared for death . . . and I, it seems, wished to write an epitaph for all of us, to say that we died as we lived.

'When we talk of those who are coming here we should, first of all, know who they are. Friends or enemies? If they come here in order to continue our work, the work of the State Duma, of Russia; if they come here in order to pledge their new strength to support us in our cry "All for the war", then they are to be received as friends, and we are with them. But if they come here with other thoughts, then they are the friends of the Germans, and we should tell them firmly and clearly: "You are enemies; we are not for you but against you."'

It may be that my words made some impression, but in any case they brought no results. Kerensky said something more. He stood there determined, ready to depart, uttering sharp,

THE MARCH DAYS

almost contemptuous, words. He grew on the mud of the Revolution, mud on which he was in the habit of jumping and running at a time when we could not even walk.

The mob of thirty thousand with which we were threatened in the course of the warning was not a myth, but a fact. It came like a cloudburst, like a flood. It is said (I did not see it myself) that Kerensky attempted to turn the first mass of soldiers, which appeared at the Tauride Palace, into the 'first revolutionary guard'.

'Citizen soldiers,' he said, 'on you falls the great honour of guarding the State Duma. . . . I declare you to be the "First Revolutionary Guard." ' But this guard did not last a minute . . . it was swept away by the mob. . . .

We shall hear much more of Kerensky, the leader of the Populist Socialists, a left-wing party in the Imperial Duma. He was one of the two left-wing members elected to the Provisional Committee of the Duma on March 12th. From that day onwards his star rose rapidly in the whirl of Russian politics.

Kerensky took it upon himself to deal with the political prisoners of the March Days. Protopopov may have instigated the March rising in order to put it down and harness the mob to his orders. In any case, as an appointee of Rasputin he was placed under arrest. Shulgin describes the scene:

Suddenly out of Volkonsky's [the Vice-President's] room came something specially exciting; and at once the reason was whispered to me: 'Protopopov is arrested'; and at that moment I saw in the mirror the door burst open violently, and Kerensky broke in. He was pale, his eyes shone, his arm was raised: with this stretched-out arm he seemed to cut through the crowd; everyone recognized him and stood back on either side, simply afraid at the sight of him. And then in the mirror I saw that behind Kerensky there were soldiers with rifles and, between the bayonets a miserable little figure with a hopelessly harassed and terribly sunken face—it was with difficulty that I recognized Protopopov. 'Don't dare touch that man!' shouted Kerensky—pushing his way on, pallid, with impossible eyes, one arm raised, cutting through the crowd, the other tragically dropped, pointing at 'that man'. This was the arch criminal against the Revolution, the ex-Minister of the Interior.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

‘Don’t dare touch that man!’ It looked as if he were leading him to execution, to something dreadful. And the crowd fell apart. Kerensky dashed past like the flaming torch of revolutionary justice, and behind him they dragged that miserable little figure in the rumpled greatcoat, surrounded by bayonets. A grim sight!

Cutting through ‘Rodzianko’s cabinet’ Kerensky, with these words, burst into the Catherine Hall [*the great lobby*], which was crammed full of soldiers, future Bolsheviks and every kind of rabble. It was here that the real danger for Protopopov began. Here they might throw themselves on that miserable little figure, drag him from the guards, kill him, tear him to pieces. The feeling against Protopopov was as incensed as possible. But that did not happen. Struck dumb by this strange sight, the pallid Kerensky dragging his victim, the crowd fell away before him. ‘Don’t dare touch that man!’ It seemed ‘that man’ was no longer a man, and they let him through.

Kerensky’s melodramatic behaviour was obviously distasteful to the restrained Shulgin.

I do not know whether it was by Kerensky’s orders, or the idea just came of itself, that volunteer police ran all over the city ‘arresting’. With a student at the head, followed by armed workmen and soldiers, they ran here and there, breaking into this and that apartment, grabbing ‘officials of the old régime’ and dragging them to the Duma.

One of the first to be brought was Shcheglovitov. This was Kerensky’s first chance to shine. With a look of inspiration he faced the old Tsarist statesman and said:

‘Ivan Grigorevich Shcheglovitov, you are arrested. . . . Your life is spared. . . . Know that the Duma does not shed blood!’

What magnanimity! It was beautifully done. This was Kerensky—actor to the very bone, but a man who was honestly opposed to the shedding of blood. ‘Ecclesia abhorret sanguinem,’ said the old inquisitors as they burned their victims. This was Kerensky. He burned Russia on the altar of freedom, while pronouncing the words—‘The Duma does not shed blood.’

No matter how you interpret it, the fact remains that this slogan, uttered in a decorative-dramatic manner, impressed itself on the hearts and minds. How many lives it then saved!

THE MARCH DAYS

I became hungry . . . and started to move toward the buffet. Every room was crowded to the limit. . . . I moved with the stupid mob, and was carried along to the hallway which leads to the restaurant. Suddenly someone standing near me said something. I looked up and saw a soldier.

'Do you happen to have it in the Duma?'

I thought at first that he wanted a cigarette, but when I looked at him I realized that it was something else.

'Have what? What is it that you want?'

'Officers.'

'What kind of officers?'

'Oh, any kind who will do.'

I looked bewildered—'Any kind who will do.'

He continued: 'I told our fellows that it won't do to be altogether without officers . . . they are angry with those we have . . . but how can we get along without them? It is not right. For order's sake there must be officers. . . . Perhaps you have some in the Duma who will do?'

I shall remember this soldier as long as I live. He came to the Duma for officers 'who will do'. He did not find them . . . they were not to be found . . . the Duma did not have them. Ah, if it had them! . . . Even if only to the extent of the mobilized 'opposing side' . . .

*

Until late in the night we had the same thing over and over again: meeting in the Duma, flow of the mob through the halls, coming of military units, playing the Marseillaise, ringing of telephones, tens, hundreds of excited people inquiring what to do, groups of armed men bringing in people arrested. To these should be added the 'calls' of the Committee of the State Duma. Rodzianko's long-distance conversation with Headquarters [*military headquarters at Mogilev*], demanding immediate decision as to what to do, how to act.

It is only later that it became known that the Empress telephoned to the Emperor that 'concessions are necessary'.

This telegram was a year and a half late. She should have given him that advice in the autumn of 1915. 'Concessions' should have been made for the retreat 'without ammunition'. A majority of the Fourth Duma proposed that this should be done. But at that time they refused to pay for the loss of twenty guberniias.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Now—now it is apparently too late. What kind of concessions can one make to satisfy this stormy sea?

That night, if I remember correctly, the Duma made some kind of an attempt to arm by creating the post of Commandant of the State Duma. We slept in chairs . . . woke from time to time with the thought 'how to find a way out'.

On the evening of the same day, March 12th, a body of men met in another part of the Tauride Palace to set up, on the model of 1905, the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. This organization included nearly all the left-wing political elements, Social Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and Bolsheviks amongst them [see the Glossary]. Only later did the different groups part ways in their programmes of action. At first a left-wing member of the Duma like Kerensky was able to keep a foot in both the Duma and Soviet camps, and we see him running backwards and forwards from meetings in both parts of the Tauride Palace in a harassed manner. N. N. Sukhanov recorded his impressions of the first meeting of the Soviet at 9 p.m. on March 12th. About fifty workers and twenty soldiers had been gathered in by telephone calls and hand messengers to represent Petrograd.

Sukhanov himself had embarked on his political career at the age of twenty-one as a Socialist Revolutionary and had been imprisoned in 1904 in Moscow for helping to run an underground printing-shop. Like Shulgin he was an intellectual, but an intellectual of the street-corner, ready to come to grips with the masses.

N. S. Chkheidze, a Menshevik and the only other left-wing politician to be elected a member of the Provisional Committee of the Duma set up on March 12th, also played an important role in the Soviet as well. But by dividing their loyalties, Kerensky and his party, the Socialist Revolutionaries, and Chkheidze and the Mensheviks eventually fell between two stools and had to yield finally to pressure from the left, brought to bear on them by the Bolsheviks under Lenin.

I don't remember what happened to the future permanent chairman of the Soviet, Chkheidze. Skobelev was left to take the chair; in the midst of the hurly-burly and the general excitement he had neither a general plan of action nor control of the

THE MARCH DAYS

meeting itself, which proceeded noisily and quite chaotically. But this by no means prevented the Soviet from performing at this very first session its basic task, vital to the Revolution—that of concentrating into one centre all the ideological and organizational strength of the Petersburg democracy, with undisputed authority and a capacity for rapid and decisive action.

Immediately after the formation of the Praesidium the customary demands for ‘order’ rang out from various sides. The chairman, wishing to end formalities, put forward for confirmation the already functioning Credentials Committee, headed by Gvozdev, but it was not in the least surprising that business was interrupted at this point by the soldiers, who demanded the floor to make their reports. The demand was enthusiastically supported, and the scene that followed was worthy of enthusiasm.

Standing on stools, their rifles in their hands, agitated and stuttering, straining all their powers to give a connected account of the messages entrusted to them, with their thoughts concentrated on the narrative itself, in unaccustomed and half-fantastic surroundings, without thinking and perhaps quite unaware of the whole significance of the facts they were reporting, in simple, rugged language that infinitely strengthened the effect of the absence of emphasis—one after another the soldiers’ delegates told of what had been happening in their companies. Their stories were artless, and repeated each other almost word for word. The audience listened as children listen to a wonderful, enthralling fairy-tale they know by heart, holding their breaths, with craning necks and unseeing eyes.

‘We’re from the Volynskii Regiment . . . the Pavlovskii . . . the Lithuanian . . . the Keksholm . . . the Sappers . . . the Chasseurs . . . the Finnish . . . the Grenadiers. . . .’

The name of each of the magnificent regiments that had launched the Revolution was met with a storm of applause.

‘We had a meeting . . .’ ‘We’ve been told to say . . .’ ‘The officers hid . . .’ ‘To join the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies. . . .’ ‘They told us to say that we refuse to serve against the people any more, we’re going to join with our brother workers, all united, to defend the people’s cause. . . . We would lay down our lives for that.’ ‘Our general meeting told us to greet you. . . .’ ‘Long live the Revolution!’ the delegate would add in a voice

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

already completely extinguished by the throbbing roar of the meeting.

Dreadful rifles, hateful greatcoats, strange words! Theoretically all this had been known, well known, known since that morning. But in practice no one had understood or digested the events that had turned everything topsy-turvy. . . .

It was then and there proposed, and approved with storms of applause, to fuse together the revolutionary army and the proletariat of the capital and create a united organization to be called from then on the 'Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. . . .'

But a great many regiments were still not with us. Were they hesitating, consciously neutral, or ready to fight the 'enemy within'?

The situation was still critical. There was the possibility of bloody skirmishes between the organized regiments and their officers. The Revolution might still be captured with bare hands.

*

In connection with the defence of the city there naturally cropped up a proposal for a proclamation to the populace in the name of the Soviet. . . .

We left the meeting and looked for a place where we could compose the proclamation. . . .

We couldn't find anywhere to work, and we made our way through the crowded antechamber over to the right wing, hoping to settle ourselves in one of the offices of the Duma. As before, we were passed by files of police and other 'politicals' of a completely novel and unheard-of kind, all under arrest. Some were picked out and sent into the ministerial pavilion, now turned into a common room for higher Tsarist dignitaries. The small fry, having filled up two or three of the Duma apartments, were placed in the galleries of the big White Hall, where they also stayed during the days that followed.

In the Catherine Hall and the antechamber, soldiers, arms in hand, were standing in groups or columns where someone had drawn them up in orderly, but loose, formation. Others had stacked their arms and were sitting on the floor supping on bread, herrings, and tea. Others, finally, were already asleep, stretched out on the floor like third-class passengers huddled together for warmth in railway stations.

Going over to the right corridor, we saw tired soldiers coming

THE MARCH DAYS

out of the street into the antechamber and neighbouring rooms, shouting and jostling their way through the crowd, carrying burdens and throwing down part of their load right there at the entrance. Most of it consisted of an enormous number of cases of shells, rifles, revolvers, and also machine-gun belts. The machine-guns themselves, protected by guards, were also visible here and there.

Sacks of meal had been heaped into a pile a step or two from the entrance. Near them stood two obedient guards, just like those posted by Tsarist officers, who didn't show the slightest sign of understanding what was taking place around them. 'Whom are they obeying and why?' flashed through my mind. . . .

'Here it is, finally got here, the best flour !' called out a soldier cheerfully, giving me a vigorous push with his case.

One's feet slid on the floor, where mud and snow were mingled. Chaos was everywhere. There was a merciless draught through the door from the street, and a reek of soldiers' boots and greatcoats.

We pushed on further but could find nowhere to work until we came to the room of the chairman of the Duma. It was empty or nearly empty. We settled ourselves at the desk, on which were a telephone and writing things. Until we were all assembled, I decided to slip into the Military Commission's rooms opposite, to find out what the situation was. The Commission had removed into the next room (to avoid the crowds with no business there), and I was told that work, under the inspiration of Kerensky, was going rapidly ahead. But others, with sceptical smiles or hopeless shrugs, reported differently.

The same night, in another part of the city, the writer P. Sorokin, a Socialist Revolutionary like Sukhanov, sat down to record his impressions of the eventful day. Sorokin gives a more confused picture than either Sukhanov or Shulgin, but then this is how things must have seemed to most of those who were swept up in the turmoil of the March Days:

It has come at last. At two o'clock in the morning, just now returned from the Duma, I hasten to set down the stirring events of this day. In the morning, being not quite well, and lectures at

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

the University being virtually stopped, I decided to stay at home and read the work of V. Pareto, *Trattato di Sociologia Generale*. From time to time I was interrupted by telephone, friends asking me for news and in turn giving their own to me.

‘Crowds on the Nevskii are bigger than ever today.’

‘Workmen of the Putiloskii factory and of the Vyborg side have gone out into the streets.’

‘Heavy firing is heard from different quarters of the town.’

‘They say that the Duma has been dissolved.’

At noon telephone service was discontinued, and undisturbed I resumed my studies until about three o’clock when one of my students rushed in with the news that two regiments, armed and carrying red flags, had left their barrack and were marching on the Duma, there to unite with the workmen.

‘Is this true?’ I exclaimed incredulously.

‘I saw them myself.’

Hastily leaving the house, we hurried to the Troitskii Bridge. Here we found a large but orderly crowd listening to the firing and greedily drinking in every bit of news. Nobody knew anything positively. Cavalry police kept the crowds in check and allowed nobody to cross the Neva.

Boom! Rat-a-tat, tat-tat-tat-tat. . . .

‘Who’s firing? On whom?’

‘Let’s go to the central part of town,’ I suggested. ‘We may learn something there.’

‘But the bridges are ripped to pieces.’

‘We have the ice of the Neva,’ I urged.

‘Well, I’m game.’

Not without difficulty did we cross the river and reach the Economic Committee of the Union of Cities and *zemstvos* where I hoped to get authentic information, but here they knew no more than we. Somehow or other we had to find out what was happening. Also it occurred to me that if the regiments did reach the Duma they would probably have to be fed. So I said to my friends—the members of Committee: ‘You try to get some food together, and at a message from me send it to the Duma.’ An old acquaintance, Mr Kusmin, at this moment joined us and we started. Nevskii Prospect near the Ekaterina Canal was still quiet, but as we turned into the Liteinyi the crowd grew larger and much louder grew the sound of the guns. The frantic

THE MARCH DAYS

efforts of the police to disperse the crowds were utterly without effect.

'Ah-h! Pharaohs! Your end is coming!' howled the mob.

From where we stood we could see the red glow of a fire near the Nikolaevskii Station. 'At last! At last!' cried a man pointing to the ominous reflection.

'What is burning?'

'The police station,' he exulted.

'But there is a fire station in the same building.'

'That won't help. We are going to destroy all Government offices, burn, smash, kill all police, all tyrants, all despots!' he cried in frenzy.

Advancing cautiously along the Liteinyi, we came upon fresh bloodstains and saw on the pavement two dead bodies. Before our horrified eyes a man, trying to cross the street, fell mortally wounded by a flying bullet. Skilfully manoeuvring, we finally reached the Tauride Palace, finding around the building vast crowds of people, soldiers and workmen. No attempt had yet been made to enter the Russian Parliament, but cannon and machine-guns were everywhere in evidence.

'Revolutionists are prepared to defend their Duma,' said my friend Kusmin with approval.

'On the contrary,' I replied. 'A crazy mob is forcing the Duma into a revolution which it does not want. You will soon behold the real object of this demonstration.'

The hall of the Duma presented a striking contrast to the tumult without. Here was comfort, dignity, order. Only here and there in corners could be seen small groups of deputies discussing the situation. At the door I met the Social Democrat Skobelev.

'Hurrah! It has come at last,' he greeted us with outstretched hand.

'Have the soldiers had any food?' I asked.

'Little enough. Can you do anything about this?'

'I am going to try to do something,' I assured him.

The Duma, the deputy Rievsky told me, had actually been appointed as a temporary Government.

'Does this mean that you have allied yourself with the Revolution?' I asked.

'No. . . . However, perhaps I have,' he replied nervously.

This same confusion and uncertainty I observed in utterances

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

of other deputies. The captains who were steering the Ship of State into the teeth of hurricane were not sure of their own course. 'A bad symptom,' I thought to myself. 'But perhaps I do them injustice.'

I next made an attempt to call various friends by telephone, but the service by this time was impossible, so I went back to the court of the Duma and explained to a group of soldiers that I was trying to get provisions brought for them. They found an automobile, with a red flag flying from it, and we drove off through the crowd.

'This is enough to hang us all in case the Revolution is put down,' I said to my guards jestingly.

'Don't worry. All will be right,' they answered.

Near the Duma lived the lawyer Grusenbergh. His telephone was working and I got in touch with friends who promised that food for the troops would soon be forthcoming. Returning to the Duma I found the crowds massed closer than ever. In the courtyard and in all adjacent streets were excited groups surrounding orators, members of the Duma, soldiers, and workmen, all holding forth on the significance of the day's events, hailing the Revolution and the fall of Tsarist despotism. All exalted the rising power of the people and called on all citizens to support the Revolution. These incendiary speeches aroused immense enthusiasm. At the doors of the Palace the crowd were calling for one and another of the more popular deputies. . . .

'These feather-headed politicians are enjoying themselves now,' said a sceptical friend who stood at my side. 'Let us see what they will think about things a few days from now.'

But I myself, having caught some of the spirit of the hour, exclaimed confidently: 'Ah, pessimist! You do not know the people. Today they are satisfied with speeches from their leaders. Tomorrow they will demand action.'

'To the devil with it all,' he retorted. 'Let us go in.'

The hall and corridors of the Duma were packed with people. Soldiers behind rifles and machine-guns were there. But order still prevailed. The street had not yet broken in.

'Ah, comrade Sorokin, at last, Revolution! At last the day of glory has arrived!' cried one of the workers—my student: others with him approaching me joyfully. In their faces was the light of hope and exaltation.

THE MARCH DAYS

'What are you doing here, boys?' I asked.

'We were told to come here to help organize the Soviet of Workmen, as in the Revolution of 1905,' they chorused.

'Why is a Soviet necessary?'

'To defend the Revolution and the interests of the workers, to control the Government, and to proclaim our dictatorship,' they replied. 'You'll join us, won't you?'

'I haven't been elected, thank you,' I returned dryly.

'Neither have we been elected, but that doesn't matter. In such times such formalities are needless.'

'I don't agree with you,' I said, and I added: 'It may be, for the defence of the Revolution, a workmen's committee will have to be formed, but be careful about any dictatorship.'

Entering the committee-room I found several Social Democratic deputies and about twelve workmen, the nucleus of the future Soviet. From them I received an urgent invitation to become a member, but I felt no call just then to join a Soviet, so I left them for a meeting of writers who were organizing an official press committee of the Revolution. . . .

'Who elected these men as representatives of the press?' Again I asked myself. Here they were, self-appointed censors, assuming power to suppress whatever in their judgment seemed undesirable newspapers, preparing to stifle liberty of speech and the press. Suddenly there came into my mind the words of Flaubert: 'In every revolutionist is hidden a gendarme.' But I told myself that it was not fair to generalize from the actions of a few hot-heads. Meanwhile the rooms and corridors of the Duma became more densely thronged.

'What's the latest?' I asked of a deputy shouldering his way through the mass.

'Rodzianko is trying to get into communication by telegraph with the Tsar. The Executive Committee is discussing the organization of a new Ministry responsible jointly to the Tsar and to the Duma.'

'Is anybody in control and regulation of this Revolution?'

'Nobody. It is developing spontaneously.'

'How about the monarchy and the Tsar?'

'I know absolutely nothing.'

'Too bad if even you don't know about these things,' I remarked sarcastically.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Food was being brought in, a buffet was set up, and girl students began to feed the soldiers. This produced a sudden lull. But outside, I learned, things were going badly. Fires continued to break out. The people were growing hysterical with excitement, and as for the police they had retreated. Again I sought the courtyard of the Palace. The fever of liberty had by this time fairly intoxicated the multitude. Wild speeches and shrieks of applause filled the air. Excited in spite of myself I too listened and applauded, and it was midnight before I could tear myself from the place.

As no trams or cabs were to be had, I walked to the Petrogradskaia, a long distance from the Duma. Incessant firing reached my ears, and sometimes the fighting seemed so near that all pedestrians stopped, looking around for shelter. Groups of citizens huddled against the walls of houses to avoid flying bullets. On the Liteinyi blazed a very fierce fire, the magnificent building of the High Court being in flames.

'Who started that?' someone exclaimed. 'Is it not necessary to have a court building for new Russia?' The question went unanswered. We could see that other Government buildings were also burning, among them police stations, and that no efforts were being made to extinguish the fires. On the faces of many spectators of this destruction were expressions of intense satisfaction. Their countenances, in the red blaze, looked demoniac as they shouted, laughed, and danced. Here and there were heaped wooden carvings of the Russian double eagle, and these emblems of Empire, torn from shops and from Government buildings were being thrown on the fires, to the cheers of the crowd. The old régime was disappearing in the ashes and no one regretted them. No one cared even when the fires spread to private houses. 'Let them go,' one man said defiantly. 'When wood is chopped chips fly.'

Twice I came on groups of soldiers and street loafers looting wine shops with no one to stop them. But the farther we went from the Duma the more nearly normal things appeared. Here a few policemen remained at their posts. The firing was fainter. But when we crossed the Neva there came such a burst of rifle firing that everybody dropped flat on the ice until it ceased. As we reached the opposite shore we saw corpses lying on the snow.

At two o'clock I reached home and sat down to write these

THE MARCH DAYS

unhurried notes. Am I glad or am I sorry? I can hardly tell, but certainly in my mind are persistent apprehensions. Tonight only a part of the city is in the hands of the Revolutionists, but what will happen tomorrow? How long will this disorder continue? How many lives will be taken? Will these events weaken, or perhaps even destroy the army? Is it possible that they may result in the invasion of Russia by the Germans? It seems a terribly dangerous time to launch a revolution. But perhaps my premonitions are foolish. So many rejoicing and patriotic people cannot be wrong. Who was it said: 'Individuals may be mistaken, but a whole nation never'? Very well, long live the Revolution! The Autocracy had to be destroyed some time. Therefore, away with doubts and premonitions.

I looked at my books and manuscripts. I suppose they will have to be put aside for a time, I reflected. This is no time for study. Action is the thing. Goodbye, beloved friends.

The firing begins again.

On March 13th, 14th and 15th both the Provisional Committee of the Duma and the Soviet struggled for control of the Revolution. The Duma Committee was irresolute, uncertain of its new relation to its old master, the Tsar. The Soviet took bolder action, winning over to its side the soldiers, the workers and the radical intelligentsia: but the Duma still retained the support of the middle class, the officers and the Allied Governments. Shulgin writes:

March 13th

The second day was even more of a nightmare. . . . 'The revolutionary people' again overflowed the Duma. . . . So that it was impossible to move. Added to this were the bands of orators, the beastly 'hurrahs', the hateful Marseillaise, and the 'deputations'. Frenzied mobs of people from numberless organizations, institutions, societies, unions . . . desired to see Rodzianko and in his person greet the State Duma and the new Government. All made speeches, repeating the words 'people and freedom'. . . . Rodzianko replied, emphasizing 'Country and Army'. . . . One phrase does not necessarily go with the other, but the mob shouted 'hurrah' just the same. They shouted 'hurrah' to the speeches of the radicals . . . who used a different vocabulary; 'dark forces of

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

reaction, Tsarism, the old régime, revolution, democracy, power of the people, dictatorship of the proletariat, socialistic republic, land to the toilers', and again 'svoboda [*liberty*], svoboda, svoboda' until one felt sick at the stomach. . . . To all these various speeches the mob belched out 'hurrah'. Some are beginning to greet the 'Soviet of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies'. Its Executive Committee is in session alongside of us. . . . We feel that this is a second Government. . . . Kerensky and Chkheidze are elected also into that body. . . . They are a bridge between these two heads. . . . Yes, one feels that there is something with a double head but it is not a double-headed eagle. . . .

As before, companies of soldiers are coming . . . to pay their respects. They call for Rodzianko. . . . He goes out to them . . . and makes speeches in a loud voice, and they shout 'hurrah'—play the Marseillaise until one's nerves are on edge. . . .

Rodzianko is just the man for that kind of thing: he has the figure, the voice, the presence and the enthusiasm. . . . Notwithstanding all his shortcomings, he loves Russia and does all that he can, that is to say, he shouts with all his might to defend the country. He gets everybody enthusiastic and they shout 'hurrah'. But immediately following him there jumps up some kind of a Caucasus monkey [*Chkheidze*] or somebody even worse and says all kinds of defeatist stuff, arouses passion and greed. . . . Their every other word is 'Landholders, Tsarist clique, Rasputin, serfs, police.' These speakers are also greeted with 'hurrah'.

The days passed as a nightmare—no beginning, no ending, no middle, all jumbled together. Deputations from regiments, continuous telephone ringing, endless questions. 'What to do'—sending of members of the Duma to different places, discussions among ourselves, long-distance telephoning by Rodzianko, growing conflict with the Executive Committee of the Soviet.

What could we do? At the very moment when a three-hundred-year-old Government collapsed a thirty-thousand mob deluge broke over the heads of a few men who might have been able to do something.

On the 13th Sukhanov woke up in the Tauride Palace to the sound of the Revolution, which was now demanding the Tsar's abdication. Already on March 11th large crowds had shouted 'Down with the German woman' [the Empress] in the streets.

THE MARCH DAYS

I was aroused by strange noises. I realized at once where I was, but could not explain these sounds to myself.

I got up and saw two soldiers, their bayonets hooked into the canvas of Repin's portrait of Nicholas II, rhythmically tugging it down from both sides. A minute later, over the chairman's seat in the White Hall of the Duma there was an empty frame, which for many months continued to yawn in this revolutionary hall. . . . Strange. . . ! It never came into my head to worry about the fate of this portrait. To this day I don't know what happened to it; I was more interested in other things.

A number of soldiers were standing on the upper levels of the chamber, at the height of my gallery. Leaning on their rifles they watched what their comrades were doing, and quietly made their own comments. I went over to them and listened eagerly. . . . Twenty-four hours before, these rank-and-file soldiers had been the dumb slaves of the despot who was now thrown down, and at this moment the outcome of the Revolution depended on them. What had taken place in their heads during those twenty-four hours? What would they say to the shameful treatment of the portrait of the 'adored monarch' of yesterday? It evidently made no strong impression: there was neither surprise, nor any sign of intense intellectual activity, nor a shadow of that enthusiasm from which even I myself was ready to catch fire. They were making remarks in a tranquil and matter-of-fact way, so down to earth they can't be repeated.

The break had been accomplished with a sort of fabulous ease. No better sign was needed of the definite rottenness of Tsarism and its irremediable ruin.

The confusion on the streets was matched by the disorganization of the Soviet and the Duma, which had been taken unawares by the sputtering flame of revolt. Sukhanov describes the work of the Executive Committee of the Soviet on March 13th:

It was already about 11 o'clock when the Executive Committee session opened. I have the impression that during these first days its work went on almost uninterruptedly around the clock. But what work it was! They were not meetings, but a frenzied and exhausting obstacle race.

The agenda had been set up, as pointed out above, in relation to

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

the urgent tasks of the moment. But neither at that session nor in general during the days that followed could there be any question of fulfilling a programme of work.

Every five or ten minutes business was interrupted by 'urgent announcements' or 'emergency reports', 'matters of exceptional importance' which couldn't 'tolerate the slightest delay', and on which the 'fate of the Revolution depended', etc. These emergency questions were for the most part raised by the Executive Committee members themselves, who kept getting some sort of information on the side, or prompted by people who were besieging the Executive Committee. But again and again the petitioners, delegates, and messengers from every possible organization and agency, or simply from the nearby crowds, would themselves burst into the meeting.

In the great majority of cases these emergency matters were not worth a barleycorn. I don't remember what the Executive Committee did during these hours. I remember only unimaginable hubbub, tension, hunger, and the feeling of irritation at these 'exceptional reports'. There was simply no way of stopping them.

There was no order even in the meeting itself. There was no permanent chairman. Chkheidze, who later performed the chairman's duties almost permanently, didn't do much work in the Executive Committee during its first days. He was constantly being summoned—either to the Duma Committee or the Soviet sessions or, above all, 'to the people', the constantly-changing crowd standing in front of the Tauride Palace. He spoke practically without stopping both in the Catherine Hall and in the street, sometimes to workers and sometimes to soldiers. He would scarcely have time to return to the meeting of the Executive Committee and take his things off before some delegate would burst in with a categorical demand for Chkheidze, sometimes even reinforced by threats—that the mob would break in. And the tired and sleepy old Georgian would get his fur coat on again with a resigned look, put on his hat, and disappear from the Executive Committee.

There was still no permanent secretary, nor were any minutes taken. If they had been taken and preserved, they would not report any 'measures' or 'acts of state' during these hours. They would reflect nothing but chaos and 'emergency reports' about

THE MARCH DAYS

every possible danger and excess we lacked the means to combat. There were accounts of pillage, fires, and pogroms. . . .

I don't remember who presided at this meeting, nor whether there was any chairman at all. . . . On the writing-desk of the chairman of the former Finance Committee there appeared from somewhere or other tin mugs of tea with crusts of black bread and other eatables. Someone was looking after us. But there was not much food, or else there was simply no time to get it. A feeling of hunger remains in my memory. . . .

*

It began to grow noisy in the neighbouring hall. The Soviet was assembling, and of course every kind of individual who wanted to join the Revolution filtered through into Room 12. Neither the Mandates Commission which had settled in Room 11, the sentries, nor the volunteer watchdogs, could do anything with the crowd which had squeezed from the street into the Palace, and everyone from the Catherine Hall thought his place was in the Soviet. . . .

*

. . . I must note another characteristic thing: to this day I, a member of the Executive Committee, am completely ignorant of what the Soviet was doing in the course of that day. It never interested me, either then or later, simply because it was self-evident that all the practical, pivotal work had fallen on the shoulders of the Executive Committee. As for the Soviet at that moment, in the given situation, with its quantitative and qualitative composition, it was clearly incapable of any work even as a Parliament, and performed merely *moral functions*.

The Executive Committee had to accomplish by itself all the current work as well as bring into being a scheme of government. In the first place, to pass this programme through the Soviet was plainly a formality; secondly, this formality was not difficult and no one cared about it. Awareness of this imperceptibly but swiftly penetrated every member of the Executive Committee, and we devoted ourselves to our work almost without paying any attention to what was being done in the neighbouring hall.

'And what's going on in the Soviet?' I remember asking someone who had come in from beyond the curtain. He waved his

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

hand hopelessly: 'A mass meeting! Anyone who wants to gets up and says whatever he likes. . . .!'

I had several occasions to pass through the meeting-hall. At first it looked as it had done the night before: deputies were sitting on chairs and benches, at the table and along the walls; among them and in the aisles, and at each end of the hall, people of every description were standing, creating confusion and disorganizing the meeting. Then the crowds of people standing became so dense that it was difficult to get through them, and they filled up all the room to such an extent that those who had chairs also abandoned them, and the entire hall, except for the first rows, was one confused mass of people standing up and craning their necks. A few hours later the chairs had completely vanished from the hall, so that they should not take up space, and people, pouring with sweat, were standing tightly squeezed together. The Praesidium itself stood on the table, while a whole crowd of enterprising people who had climbed up on the table was hovering over the chairman's shoulders, preventing him from running the meeting. Next day, or the day after, the tables too had vanished, except for the chairman's, and the assembly finally acquired the look of a mass meeting in a riding-school.

There was some talk of transferring the Soviet to the Duma meeting-hall. But the galleries there held the arrested Secret Police and the 'pharaohs' [*the nickname for the police*]. By the fourth or fifth day, when they had been transferred to more suitable quarters or sent home, the Soviet had already grown so large that the White Hall could not contain it in full strength: only the sessions of the Soldiers' and Workers' Sections of the Soviet took place there.

Sukhanov showed his early interest in printing noted above by turning his attention to capturing the press for the Soviet:

It was imperative to come to the help of one very important branch of the Soviet economy now taking shape—the printing-shops. By the previous evening V. D. Bonch-Bruевич [*a Bolshevik who later became Secretary of the Bolshevik Council of People's Commissars*] with the help of some volunteers, had occupied the Kopeika printing-presses on the Ligovka, where the *Izvestiia* was also issued. This was one of the best printing-

THE MARCH DAYS

shops in Petersburg. Bonch set up some sort of a guard there and collected some workers. But there were neither funds, essential for wages, nor supplies, nor safety. The workers scattered, and the Soviet might have found itself at the decisive moment without this cardinal means of influencing the populace.

First Bonch sent a note to the Executive Committee couched in the most vigorous terms, and then he came himself—with a demand that the printing-shop be provided with funds, supplies, and an armed guard. I was detailed to arrange this matter with Bonch; my activities may give some notion of working conditions in the Executive Committee in these first hours of the Revolution.

There were absolutely no funds whatever; but there *had to be*, and I gave Bonch *carte blanche* with respect to arrangements with the workers. But the printing-shop had to be supplied with provisions for a hundred men of the working personnel and guard, so that the workers could stay on at the printing-shop uninterruptedly.

This matter of provisioning had to be referred to the Supply Commission. But whom could we send? And if a volunteer were found, where was the guarantee that he would reach his goal, and that he would be listened to? There were no requisition forms; no one knew just whom to apply to. It was doubtful whether the names of the Executive Committee members were known, and whether the volunteer's own name would be convincing to those persons appointed by the Supply Commission for the actual execution of the orders. Finally, were there provisions available and means of transporting them? In any case I had to go myself, leaving the session for an indefinite time and elbowing through the impenetrable crowds along the interminable draughty corridors, slippery with swill, to the supply stores set up in the Palace by the Supply Commission.

More than anything else I was embittered by consciousness of this misuse and irrevocable waste of time. But I was comforted by the thought that no other way was possible, nor could have been possible.

After long and weary wanderings I found my way to a room near the kitchen, where some unknown man, besieged by a crowd, was satisfying requests for provisions at his own discretion. After many attempts to attract his attention and after the endless exhortations and pleas assailing the storekeeper

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

from every side in the middle of this babel, I got my orders executed, but—had to find my own transport. I simply got an order, and was told, as Xerxes had been once before by the Athenians—‘go and take it’. Faced by the hundredweight or so of my load I clearly risked finding myself in the same position as Xerxes.

Accidentally overhearing a conversation in the crowd on my way I stopped a man, unknown to me but with an agreeable look, who had mentioned having a car. I ‘agitated’ at him and convinced him of the extreme importance of helping the cause of the press, and he promised to take the provisions over to the printing-shop. We arranged for him to wait for me at a certain spot where I was to bring him the order at some unspecified time. All this was practically hopeless in the atmosphere of crowds, muddle, and the general nervous strain from the mass of grandiose feelings and niggling details. But it was the only possible way.

I don’t know whether I wandered about for an hour or more. But strange as it may seem, I nevertheless found this man at the appointed spot and handed him the order. He undertook to perform the task, taking two or three armed men in the car with him for protection. Now the only question was whether he would have enough patience to get hold of what the order called for, whether he would find his car in its place, and whether anything would happen to him on the way.

But strangely enough the provisions were finally brought to the printing-shop. Bonch, however, would not answer for them without a reliable guard of about forty men, with whose help he intended to set up an ‘iron dictatorship’ in the printing-shop (and he really did terrorize practically the whole quarter later on, even posting sentries with machine-guns).

A detachment had to be sent, or rather a garrison for the printing-shop had to be created. This was complicated.

I started trying to force my way into the Military Commission. At several points the lines of sentries would not let anyone through, sending them to other points where one was required to show some sort of pass, issued by no one knew whom, which had not been distributed to members of the Executive Committee. Together with the crush, hunger, fatigue, and the consciousness of the absurdity of such ‘work’, all this was maddening.

THE MARCH DAYS

Having somehow forced my way with great difficulty into the heart of the Military Commission, with equal difficulty I compelled the attention of one of the people in charge, who were being torn to pieces by petty, futile, and impracticable matters. Finally I talked him into realizing the importance of my business for the whole course of the Revolution. But he could do nothing. He ordered one of the crowd of officers to take command of the printing-shop garrison and proceed there immediately—then he ordered out a second and a third. Not one obeyed, each using the first excuse that occurred to him: special missions, the lack of men, more important tasks, etc. . . .

Clearly, I should have to 'agitate' myself, and I set about it, with a shrug of the shoulders at the military headquarters, this sole staff and only 'real force' of the Revolution. After a lengthy search I came across a lieutenant or captain of ripe years and modest appearance, who agreed to be the military commander of the printing-shop. But he had absolutely no one under his command. And it was clear that this honest but inefficient fellow would never find himself a detachment through his own efforts.

In order to assemble one for him, I now had to carry on not individual agitation among the 'thinkers' but a 'mass' agitation among the ignorant and uncomprehending. I considered this business completely hopeless for myself, or at least excessively lengthy. I went off in search of Kerensky, the only man able to settle the matter at one stroke, by a single propaganda speech to the soldiers in the Catherine Hall. But it was necessary first of all to find him, then to pry him loose, and thirdly to talk him into it.

After further tribulations I found him in the apartments of the Duma Committee, in the depths of the right wing. There were really serious obstacles there to be surmounted, and I found Kerensky running around in circles in his eagerness to encompass the entire Revolution and in no condition to do anything whatever practical for it, but only something 'moral'. . . . Around him thronged a dense crowd from every democratic or bourgeois circle, buttonholing him or grasping his coat-tails and interrupting each other. It was clear that he was completely at the mercy of these petty current tasks, without the slightest possibility of grasping or furthering the motive forces of the strate-

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

gic and political situation. I evidently not only had to interest him in my printing-shop business but had every right to do so.

Taking hold of him, like the others, by his buttonhole, I explained the matter to him in a tone that precluded any objections, not sparing the most resounding expressions about the 'fate of the Revolution'. He listened, agreed at once, and shouldering aside the crowd rushed off into the Catherine Hall, to the soldiers, to give one of his innumerable speeches and make up a garrison for the printing-shop. I barely had time to point out to him the captain, who hurried after him. But I left them and turned to further tasks of a similar kind that came up, accomplishing them by the same methods.

Later it turned out that a garrison had indeed been organized and I encountered the captain for several weeks afterwards in the printing-shop, where he was living in peace and peacefully 'commanding' the garrison, 'holding' the citadel of the Revolution, 'almost regularly' receiving provisions and blessing his fate. . . .

This was how work had to be done and technical functions performed during the first few days, until—little by little, out of nothing—a huge machine and a more or less adequate organization were created. Even now, in front of the curtain in the Executive Committee room and in Room 11, where our women and families had gathered, eager to take part and demanding assignments—even now typewriters had turned up from somewhere and begun to clatter away.

On the next day, March 14th, the Soviet stole a march on its rival, the Duma, by issuing the notorious Order Number One. This Order permitted all Russian soldiers, at the front as well as in Petrograd, to keep their arms, form committees and elect delegates to the Soviet; they were to obey only those commands which were issued by the Soviet. Officers were instructed to be polite to their men and not to use the traditional 'thou' form in addressing them. The Order profoundly shocked the members of the Duma Committee, but it was broadcast over the Tsarskoe-Selo radio station on March 15th and published in *Izvestiia* on the following day. (Sukhanov's salvaging of the press was thus of vital importance.) Here Sukhanov comes upon N. D. Sokolov, a Bolshevik sympathizer of the Executive Committee of the

THE MARCH DAYS

Soviet, preparing the Order with the advice of nine soldiers and a sailor elected for the purpose.

Around 10 o'clock, going back behind the curtain of Room 13, where the Executive Committee had been in session shortly before, I found the following scene: N. D. Sokolov was sitting at a table writing. He was surrounded on all sides by soldiers, standing, sitting, and leaning on the table, half-dictating and half-suggesting to Sokolov what he should write. There flashed through my mind Tolstoy's description of how he used to make up stories together with the children in the school at Yasnaia Poliana.

It appeared that this was a committee elected by the Soviet to compose an 'Order' to the soldiers. There was no agenda and no discussion of any kind, everyone spoke, and all were completely absorbed in the work, formulating their collective opinion without any voting. I stood and listened, extraordinarily interested. When the work was finished they put a heading on the sheet: 'Order No. 1.'

This is the background of the document that earned such resounding fame. . . .

The Duma Committee was rapidly falling into a panic, as can be seen from Shulgin's description:

March 14th

I worked my way to Rodzianko's office. What has happened? 'They' are here. Where are 'we'?

The Committee of the State Duma has moved to other quarters. These other quarters are two small rooms, facing the library at the end of the hall. . . . It is from this place that Russia is going to be governed in the future. . . . Here I found our crowd. They sat around a table covered with green velvet. At the head was Rodzianko, around him all the others, except Kerensky, who was absent. I did not finish my report about the Peter-Paul Fortress [*Shulgin had been sent there to restore order*], when the doors flew open and Kerensky 'dramatically' stepped in. He was followed by two armed soldiers and between them was a man holding a bundle. Kerensky took it from him and said: 'You may go.'

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The soldiers faced about in a military manner, the official of the bundle turned around, and all three went out.

Kerensky then looked at us, and threw the package on the table.

'Our secret treaties with the Allies. . . . Hide them,' and disappeared as dramatically as he appeared. . . .

'Gentlemen, what are we going to do with them?' said Shidlovsky; 'we have not even a cupboard.'

'What's all this nonsense?' shouted Rodzianko. 'Where did he get it?'

Before he had time to get really angry his own secretary rushed in . . . announcing that sailors have come . . . to see the President of the Duma.

'To hell with them! When am I going to do my own work? There ought to be an end to this sometime.'

'Grand Duke Cyril Vladimirovich is with them,' said the secretary.

'You had better go,' suggested someone.

Rodzianko grumbled and went . . . made a speech . . . about the country . . . about 'not allowing the enemy, the damned Germans, to destroy our Mother Russia' . . . and the auditors shouted 'hurrah'. One could stand this kind of thing once, twice, thrice, but when it continued without end . . . it became unendurable. . . .

What to do with the secret treaties. . . . There was no closet, not even a drawer in the table. . . .

Someone got an idea:

'Throw them under the table; no one will see them—look,' and with these words the documents were kicked under the table. . . .

Some time passed and . . . again Kerensky, again with soldiers, again with a bundle.

'You may go.'

The soldiers departed.

'Here are two million roubles . . . brought from some Ministry. . . . This can't go on . . . we have got to appoint Commissars. Where is Michael Vladimirovich? [Rodzianko].'

'Outside.'

'Shouting hurrah? Enough of hurrah. Let's get down to work—members of the Committee.'

THE MARCH DAYS

Off he went. . . .

We threw the two millions under the table to join the secret treaties.

For the hundredth time Rodzianko returned. . . . He was all excited; nay, more, he was in a rage. . . . He dropped into his chair.

‘What happened? What’s the matter?’

‘What’s the matter? These scoundrels.’

He took a look around.

‘You can talk, they are not here.’

(‘They’, that is, Chkheidze and others of the left.)

‘What scoundrels! Everything went along nicely. I made them a speech. Their greeting could not have been better. I gave them a patriotic speech. . . . They shouted “hurrah”. I looked around—their spirit was all that could be desired. But just as I ended, someone from them began.’

‘From whom?’

‘Oh, from them . . . how do you call them . . . those sons-of-a-dog deputies (in Russian *sobachie deputaty*, a pun on the Russian for Workers’ Deputies, *rabochie deputaty*) . . . from the Soviet Executive Committee . . . you know, that riffraff.’

‘What was it they said?’

‘Here is what they said:

“‘The President of the State Duma calls on you, comrades, to save the Russian land. This is easy to understand, comrades, Mr Rodzianko has something to save. He has a considerable piece of that Russian land in Ekaterinoslav *guberniia*. And what land! It is possible he may have land elsewhere. For example in Novgorod? It is said that you can drive there through forest and when you ask whose it is, you are told that it belongs to Rodzianko. You see, Rodzianko and the other landowners of the State Duma have something to save—their estates, principedoms, counties and baronies. They call this Russian land. They are calling on you, comrades, to save it. Suppose you ask the President of the Duma if he would be as concerned in saving the Russian land, if this Russian land of the landowners became yours? The beasts!’”

‘What did you answer?’

‘What did I answer? I do not remember what I answered. The scoundrels!’

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

He banged on the table with such force that the secret treaties jumped.

'The scoundrels! We offer up the lives of our sons, and that riffraff thinks that we begrudge our land. Damn the land! What good is it to me if Russia perishes? Dirty scum! Take my shirt but save Russia. That's what I told them.'

By this time his voice became so shrill that we had to quiet him.

It took him some time to calm down. Then . . . he explained the course of events. He is in constant communication by direct wire with Headquarters and General Ruzsky [*the Commander of the Northern Army*]. He tells Headquarters what is taking place . . . that the situation is getting worse, that the Ministers have disappeared, that the Duma has temporarily taken charge of the Government, but that its power is very shaky because (1) the troops have revolted, and will not obey their officers, and even threaten them; (2) alongside of the Committee of the State Duma there has grown up a new institution, namely the Executive Committee of the Soviets, which strives to get all the power for itself and undermines the power of the Duma; and (3) owing to the general demoralization and the growing anarchy something out of the ordinary must be done. It was believed at first that a responsible Ministry would satisfy the clamour, but with each hour's delay the situation grows worse. It became quite clear yesterday that the Monarchy itself is in danger. The idea seems now to prevail that only the abdication of the Emperor in favour of his son can save the dynasty. . . . General Alekseev [*virtually Commander-in-Chief of the Army at this time*] is also of this opinion.

'This morning,' continued Rodzianko, 'I planned to go to Headquarters [*the Staff Headquarters at Mogilev*] to see the Emperor, to report to him that abdication is the only way. But "they" [*the Soviet*] learned of my intentions . . . and when I got ready to depart they informed me that they had given orders not to give me a train. . . . Think of it! They declared that they would not allow me to go alone, that Chkheidze, and some others, would have to go with me. But, your humble servant is not going to the Emperor with them. . . . Chkheidze was to be accompanied by a battalion of "revolutionary soldiers". Imagine what they would have done there. With that cattle I . . .'

THE MARCH DAYS

Just then someone called me out. . . .

On my return I found the Committee greatly excited. . . . Rodzianko was bellowing, 'Who wrote this? Of course, they, the scoundrels. This was done purposely to help the Germans . . . traitors. . . . What will happen now?'

'What is the matter?'

'Here read this.'

I took the piece of paper . . . and as I began to read, a mist came over my eyes. . . . It was the famous Order No. 1.

'Where did you get it?'

'It is stuck up all over the city . . . on all the walls!'

I felt as if . . . this was the end of the army. . . .

The news of Order No. 1 shook the Provisional Committee, which was now forced into taking positive action of some kind. Here we see them in session. Alexander Guchkov had been the leader of the Octobrist Party in the Imperial Duma, the Party which based its policy on the acceptance of the October Manifesto of 1905. He became Minister for War in the first Provisional Government. Paul Miliukov became the Foreign Minister: he was a member of the Cadets [see the Glossary]. Between them the Cadets and the Octobrists, both right-wing parties, had a controlling voice in the Provisional Government from March to May 1917.

It must have been toward four o'clock in the morning when Guchkov came in a second time. He was greatly aroused. Prince Viazemsky, who sat in the automobile with him, had just been killed . . . by a shot fired at the 'officer' from some barracks. . . .

At this moment all the members of the Committee were not present. Rodzianko, Miliukov and I were there; the others I do not recall. But I do remember that neither Kerensky nor Chkheidze were on hand. Our own crowd was there, and consequently Guchkov talked quite openly. Here is the substance of his remarks:

'We must come to some decision. The situation grows worse every minute. Viazemsky was killed because he was an officer and for no other reason. . . . Similar acts take place elsewhere . . . if not today . . . then tomorrow. On my way to this place I noticed officers in the rooms of the Duma—they are hiding—they pray to us to save them. We must do something. . . . We

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

must above all save the Monarchy. . . . Russia cannot be without a Monarchy. . . . It is evident that the present Tsar can no longer reign. . . . Any command that he might give would not be obeyed. . . . If that is so, the time is not far distant when this revolutionary riffraff will take matters into its own hands and try to find a way out. . . . It will settle the question of the Monarchy in its own way. . . . This is inevitable if we allow the initiative to slip out from our hands.'

Here he was interrupted by Rodzianko.

'I intended to go to the Emperor this morning . . . but I was prevented. . . . They informed me that I could not have a train and demanded that I should be accompanied by Chkheidze with a battalion of soldiers.'

'I knew it,' said Guchkov, 'and for that reason it is necessary to proceed in a different manner. . . . We must act quickly and secretly. If we work with "them" the results will be less advantageous for us. . . . We must put them before a *fait accompli*. . . . We must give Russia a new Emperor and rally around his banner all the forces for resistance. . . . For that purpose we must act quickly and firmly. . . .'

'To be more specific—what do you have in mind?'

'I propose that someone should go at once to the Emperor and bring about an abdication in favour of the Crown Prince.'

'Ruzsky has telegraphed me,' said Rodzianko, 'that he has already spoken to the Emperor on the subject. . . . Alekseev has sent a query on the same subject to the commanders of the front. A reply is awaited.'

'I think that someone should go,' added Guchkov. 'If you will agree to it and will authorize me to do so I will go. But I should like to have someone to come with me.'

We looked at each other . . . and after a moment I said:

'I'll go with you.'

We exchanged a few words more. I tried to summarize and clarify our ideas: the Committee of the State Duma is of the opinion that the only way out of the present difficulty is the abdication of the Emperor. It authorizes the two of us to report this to His Majesty, and if he should agree, to bring the act of abdication to Petrograd. The abdication should be in favour of the heir, Aleksei Nicholaevich. The two of us are to go together and in secret.

THE MARCH DAYS

I fully realized what we were doing. I felt that the abdication was unavoidable, that it would not do to have the Emperor face to face with 'Chkheidze' [*meaning revolution*]. The abdication was to be handed over to the Monarchists for the sake of saving the Monarchy. . . .

At five in the morning Guchkov and I got into the automobile . . . and reached Guchkov's home, where he wrote out a few words. It was a poor attempt, but I was quite unable to improve on it. I was completely exhausted.

Shulgin and Guchkov carried out their appointed task.

March 15th

It just began to get light when we drove up to the station. . . . The revolutionary people were still asleep. . . . Guchkov introduced himself to the Stationmaster and asked for a train to Pskov. . . . In twenty minutes a train, made up of one locomotive and one car, was ready. . . .

Ten o'clock at night we arrived. . . . We stepped out on the platform. . . . Someone came up to say that the Emperor was waiting. He led us across the tracks . . . into the car of the Emperor. He appeared in a few minutes. . . . We bowed. . . . He shook hands with us in a friendly way . . . motioned us to a seat. Guchkov began to speak. . . . He was quite excited. He related what was taking place at the capital. . . . He painted things as they were in Petrograd. The Emperor sat there quite composed. . . .

When Guchkov had finished, the Emperor said in a calm and matter-of-fact manner:

'I have decided to abdicate from the throne. . . . Until three in the afternoon I thought that I would abdicate in favour of my son Aleksei. . . . But at that time I changed my mind to abdicate in favour of my brother, Michael.'

We did not expect this. It seems to me that Guchkov raised some objections . . . that I asked for a quarter of an hour to advise with Guchkov . . . but it did not take place . . . we agreed. . . . What else could we do?

The Tsar rose . . . and we all stood up. . . . Guchkov handed him his outline of the abdication act which the Emperor took and walked out.

After a little while he returned with the text of the abdication, which he handed to Guchkov.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

It was twenty minutes before midnight The Emperor bid us goodbye, shaking us by the hand . . . and his attitude was, if anything, warmer than when we arrived.

We returned to our car . . . and in the morning [March 16th] reached Petrograd.

Nicholas still kept a diary during these fateful days.

March 14th, Wednesday

. . . Failed to reach Tsarskoe, but my thoughts and feelings are always there. How hard it must be for poor Alix [*the Empress*] to go through all these events alone. Lord help us.

March 15th, Thursday

In the morning Ruzsky came and read his very long direct-wire talk with Rodzianko. According to this, the situation in Petrograd is such that a Ministry of the Duma would now be powerless to do anything, for it has to contend with the Social-Democratic Party, represented by the workers' committee. My abdication is required. Ruzsky transmitted this talk to Headquarters, and Alekseev sent it on to all the commanders-in-chief. By 2 o'clock replies were received from them. The gist of them is that in order to save Russia and keep the army at the front quiet, such a step must be taken. I have agreed. From Headquarters has been sent a draft of a manifesto. In the evening Guchkov and Shulgin arrived from Petrograd, with whom I discussed the matter, and I handed them the signed and altered manifesto. At 1 o'clock in the morning [of the 16th] I left Pskov, with a heavy heart because of the things gone through. All around me there is treachery, cowardice, and deceit.

March 16th, Friday

I slept long and well. Awoke far beyond Dvinsk. The day was sunny and cold. Talked with those near me about yesterday. Read a great deal about Julius Caesar. Arrived at 8.20 at Mogilev. All ranks of the Staff were on the platform. Received Alekseev in the car. At 9.30 I went over to the house. Alekseev came with the latest news from Rodzianko. It transpires that Misha [*Grand Duke Michael*] has abdicated. His manifesto ends with a four-tail formula [*Universal, direct, equal, and secret suffrage*] for the

THE MARCH DAYS

election of a constituent assembly within 6 months. God knows who put it into his head to sign such stuff. In Petrograd, the disturbances have ceased—if it would only remain that way.

General Lukomsky, Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff at this time (and later the witness of the Kornilov affair recorded below), saw Nicholas in his distress:

Before his departure from Mogilev, Nicholas II expressed the desire to take leave of his Staff.

General Alekseev invited all the members of the Staff of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, and the representatives of His Majesty's Escort, to assemble in the great reception hall of the Adjutant-General.

The Emperor entered the hall. After bowing to everybody, he made a short speech. He said that the welfare of his country, the necessity for putting an end to the Revolution and preventing the horrors of civil war, and of directing all the efforts of the State to the continuation of the struggle with the foe at the front, had determined him to abdicate in favour of his brother, the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich. The latter, however, had, in his turn, resigned his rights to the Throne. The Emperor appealed to us to obey the Provisional Government [*the Duma Committee*] and to apply all our efforts to the one great end in view—that of bringing the war to a victorious end. After this, having wished us all good luck, and embraced General Alekseev, the Emperor made the round of the room, stopping to talk to some of us. Our nerves were strained to the utmost; stifled sobs were heard, and two of those who were present had a hysterical fit; several people fainted. One tall, imposing-looking old man of His Majesty's Escort, who was standing near me, groaned as in anguish, big tears rolled down his withered cheeks, he wavered and fell down at full length looking as one dead.

The Emperor could bear this torture no longer; he made a general salute, and wiping off a tear left the room abruptly. . . .

. . . When the Emperor, with some of his retinue, stepped into the train that was to take him to Tsarskoe, a very disagreeable incident occurred which had no *raison d'être*, and might very well have been avoided.

The delegates of the Duma, whether acting by order from

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Petrograd or of their own accord, made a review of all those who accompanied the Emperor, telling some of them that they were not allowed to travel with the Emperor, and must leave the train. Among these was Admiral Nilov. All this was done very roughly, and in the coarsest manner, the delegates declaring that they were masters in the train, and their orders must be obeyed.

This incident was reported to the Emperor; but he only made a weary gesture, and said in a low voice: 'We must submit to all their requests. Let them do as they will now.'

Sukhanov expresses the typical reaction of the Soviet, for which the Duma's efforts had been worthless.

In the middle of the day someone brought the Executive Committee the text of the abdication of Nicholas II. Shulgin and Guchkov had brought the document from Pskov early in the morning.

Nicholas's last 'manifesto' of course made no impression whatever on the Executive Committee. There was laughter when someone gave us the information that before his abdication Nicholas had 'appointed' G. E. Lvov Premier. [*Prince Lvov, leader of the Cadet Party, did in fact remain Premier of the Provisional Government until July 21st.*] Terribly prudent of the wise and solicitous monarch! Very subtle of the bourgeois diplomats who had inspired him!

We laughed at the naïve anachronism of the text of the last manifesto, but didn't pay the slightest attention to the fact of the abdication itself. It was self-evident to all of us that at this point, on March 16th, it introduced absolutely nothing new into the general situation. The Revolution was taking its course, and the new combination of forces would be established quite independently of the activities of any Romanovs. There were no Romanovs on that 16th of March, just as there had been none the day before, the 15th, either, or even the day before that, and just as there would be none in the future. No efforts, no diplomacy, no intrigues of the 'right wing' could change one single iota in all this. This was all clear—with the 'manifesto' just as much as without it.

The Soviet democracy had consciously tolerated a slight ob-

THE MARCH DAYS

scurity and lack of agreement with respect to the general question of the republic. But even so, such an attitude on the part of the Executive Committee was possible only because the republic was secure: it was in our hands. This allowed us the luxury of silence—for diplomatic purposes.

The act of abdication was a worthless scrap of paper which might have a literary, but certainly no political, interest for us. It was another matter everywhere else in the Tauride Palace, filled as before with a motley crowd. There this scrap of paper was violently fallen on and snatched from hand to hand. It was said the same thing was going on in the city. The masses regarded the document as an important event, even against the background of everything that had happened during those days. They saw in it an essential stage and perhaps a crisis in the development of the Revolution. And there were strange people—groups, circles, and perhaps whole social strata—that saw a revolution only in this, and only in this saw the irremediable destruction of the accustomed tenor of life and only now associated the disorders that were taking place with radical changes.

Yes, the average man is stupid—as the shrewd Miliukov used to say, Miliukov, for whom this liquidation of Tsar Nicholas was not only the most self-evident necessity but also the ultimate means of avoiding these ‘radical changes’.

CHAPTER IV

THE INTERLUDE MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

After the abdication the Royal Family was exiled in Tsarskoe Selo outside Petrograd. Princess Paley, Sir George Buchanan's severe critic, describes how the news of the Tsar's abdication was brought to the Empress:

The same day, March 16th, the Grand Duke [Princess Paley's husband] went to see the Empress at 11 o'clock. It may seem incredible, but the poor woman did not yet know of her husband's abdication. No one in her *entourage* had had the courage to deal her the blow. Her five children were sick; the two eldest and the youngest were just recovering from measles, but Grand Duchess Maria (the third child) and the heir were the worst. The Grand Duke entered softly and kissed her hand slowly, unable to find any words. His heart was almost breaking. The Empress, dressed in her simple nurse's costume, struck him by her calm and the serenity of her look.

'Dear Alix,' the Grand Duke said at last, 'I wanted to be with you during these difficult moments. . . .'

The Empress looked him in the eyes: 'Nicky?' she asked.

'Nicky is well,' the Grand Duke added hurriedly. 'But be brave, as brave as he has been. Today, March 16th, at one o'clock in the morning, he signed his abdication and that of Aleksei.'

The Empress started and lowered her head, as if she was praying. Then, pulling herself up, she said:

'If Nicky has done it, then he had to do it. I have faith in divine mercy. God will not abandon us.'

But in pronouncing these words large tears rolled down her cheeks.

'I am no longer Empress,' she said with a sad smile. 'But I am still a sister of charity. Since Misha [Grand Duke Michael] is Emperor now, I will look after my children, my hospital, we will go to the Crimea. . . .'

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

The Grand Duke remained with her for about an hour and a half until lunch-time. She wanted to know the details of the events in the Duma. Referring to the Grand Duke who had gone there two days previously, she said in English:

‘—And X . . . what a horror. . . .’

The Grand Duke left with his nerves on edge; I did all I could to calm him and give him courage.

On March 18th a certain Colonel Kobylinsky was summoned by General Kornilov to the headquarters of the Petrograd Military District:

I was received by Kornilov, who said bluntly: ‘I have assigned you to an important and responsible position.’ I asked him what it was. ‘I will tell you tomorrow,’ answered the General. I tried to find out from him why the choice had fallen on me, but the General answered: ‘Mind your own business and get ready.’ I saluted and left. The next day, March 19th, I received no further orders, and no orders arrived on March 20th. I began to think that my appointment had lapsed, when suddenly I was told on the telephone that Kornilov ordered me to be at Tsarskoe Selo station at 8 a.m. on March 21st. On my arrival at the station I met General Kornilov and his ADC.

When we were seated in our compartment, Kornilov turned to me and said: ‘I will now enlighten you as to our destination. We are going to Tsarskoe Selo. I am going thither to place the Empress under arrest. You are going to take over the command of the Tsarskoe Selo garrison: Captain Kotsebue will be Commandant of the Palace, but you will supervise the Palace and Kotsebue will be subordinate to you.’

We arrived at the Palace. In one of the anterooms we were received by General Benckendorff, Grand Marshal of the Imperial Court, and Kornilov explained to him he would like the Emperor’s suite to assemble, and he begged Her Majesty to receive him. Benckendorff sent a footman to ask everybody to come down, and he went in person to ask the Empress to grant us an audience. When he returned he told us that the Empress would receive us in ten minutes, and shortly afterwards we were told by a footman that Her Majesty desired to see us. When Kornilov and I entered the children’s room, there was nobody there, but a

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

moment after the Empress entered from another door. We bowed. She extended her hand to Kornilov and nodded to me. Kornilov said to her: 'I have come to inform you of the decision of the Council of Ministers. From this moment you must consider yourself under arrest. If you are in need of anything, will you kindly apply to the new Commandant.' After saying this, Kornilov immediately turned to me: 'Colonel, leave us together and take up your position outside the door.' I retired. About five minutes later Kornilov called me, and when I entered the room the Empress held out her hand to me. We bowed to her and then we went downstairs. Some members of the Emperor's suite were already assembled in an anteroom, and Kornilov said briefly, 'Gentlemen, this is the new Commandant; from this time onwards the Empress is under arrest. If any of you wish to share the fate of the Imperial Family you are at liberty to stay with them, but make up your minds at once, as later I will not permit anyone to enter the Palace.' At this time the guard was kept by His Majesty's Svodnyi Guard Regiment, commanded by Major-General Ressin, and at this very moment the Major-General said that he wanted to leave. The Grand Marshal of the Imperial Court, Count Benckendorff, and Count Apraksin, who was in charge of the Empress's personal affairs, decided that they would remain with the Empress.

The same day Kornilov confirmed his instructions regarding the status of the arrested persons and the restrictions to be imposed upon them. The guards of the Svodnyi Regiment were relieved by the First Rifle Regiment, and Kornilov then left Tsarskoe Selo and I remained there as Commandant.

Before changing the guards Colonel Lazarev asked my permission to say goodbye to the Empress. I allowed him to do so, and Colonel Lazarev went in to see the Empress and wept bitterly. He also broke down when he saw the colours of the Svodnyi Regiment taken out of the anteroom. Some days later (I do not remember the date) I was notified by telephone of the arrival of the Emperor, and I went to the station. After the arrival of the train the Emperor left his compartment and walked very quickly through the station without bestowing a single glance upon anybody; then took his seat in an automobile, accompanied by a Marshal of the Court, Count Vasily Alexandrovich Dolgoruky. Two men in mufti now advanced; one of them was Vershinin, a

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

member of the Duma. They told me that their mission was ended, and that from this time the Emperor was under my charge.

I cannot forget one circumstance in particular which I witnessed at that time. Quite a number of persons had travelled in the Emperor's train, but when the Emperor left the train these people crowded out of the station and quickly dispersed, throwing frightened looks in all directions. It appears that they were very much afraid of being recognized. I thought this behaviour was rather disgusting.

I accompanied the Emperor to the Palace, and he immediately went upstairs to see his children who were ill.

Shortly afterwards the Emperor's luggage was brought from the station.

Nicholas wrote in his diary at this time:

March 22nd, Thursday

Arrived quickly and safely at Tsarskoe Selo at 11.30. But, God, what a difference! On the street, around the palace, inside the park, wherever you turn there are sentries. Went upstairs and saw dear Alix and the precious children. She looked cheerful and well. The children were lying in a darkened room, but were in good spirits except Maria, who recently came down with measles. We lunched and dined in the playroom with Aleksei. I saw good Benckendorff. . . . After tea I played a game of solitaire. In the evening we visited all the occupants of the other wing and found them in their places.

March 24th, Saturday

In the morning I received Benckendorff. Learned through him that we must remain here for some time. This is a pleasant thought. Continued burning letters and papers. Anastasia has earache just as the others had. . . . The weather was unpleasant, windy, with two degrees of frost. At 6.45 we went to evening service at the field chapel. Aleksei took his first bath. . . .

April 5th, Thursday

After 2 o'clock it cleared and thawed. Walked for a short time in the morning. Sorted my belongings and books, and sorted the things I want to take with me in case I go to England. After

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

luncheon I took a walk with Olga and Tatiana, and worked in the garden. Spent the evening as usual.

As a faithful member of the Royal Family, Princess Paley stayed on in Tsarskoe Selo after the arrest of the Tsar, braving the insults to which all persons of the court had to submit:

The life of the august prisoners was monotonous, dull, devoid of all joy. Their life was rigorously controlled. The Provisional Government was very niggardly about granting them money. All their letters were opened, and they were not allowed to use the telephone. Rough sentinels who were often drunk were posted everywhere. The Emperor's only distraction was to break the ice on a little canal running beside the iron railing of the Imperial park.

One day at the end of March, I went up to the railing; the appearance of the Emperor, accompanied by Prince Dolgoruky and Derevenko, the sailor who guarded the heir, had attracted a large number of curious men—most of them soldiers—and women. With my heart in my mouth I joined the crowd and brought my flushed face up against the bars of the railing. The soldiers gave expression to their thoughts, which made me shudder:

‘—Well, Nikolushka, there you are breaking the ice now . . . have you drunk enough of our blood? You're breaking the ice today, little father, but what will you do tomorrow? That's a change from the war, isn't it? And in summer, when there's no more ice . . . what will you do, little fellow? Perhaps you'll throw sand on the paths with a little shovel. . . .’

There was something satanic about their laughs. The Emperor was so close that he could not help hearing every single word. He stopped and cast a long, sad look at them. Suddenly everyone was silent. Then turning his eyes towards me, he noticed me and fixed his sad gaze on me. I crossed my hands as if in prayer and did all I could to show the strength of my devotion. . . . I was telling him that I would give my life at that moment in order to save him. . . . I read in his looks, so dear to me, such profound distress, such despairing resignation, that I was stifled by a flood of tears, bitter and burning, that were, alas, to be followed later by so many more. . . .



3. NICHOLAS II UNDER GUARD AT TSARSKOE SELO
MARCH 1917
(Photo: Radio Times Hulton Picture Library)

4. STREET FIGHTING
IN PETROGRAD
JULY 17, 1917
(Photo: Radio Times
Hulton Picture
Library)



The evil spirit of Rasputin continued to haunt the Royal Family in their dismal exile. Colonel Kobylinsky, the commandant of the Tsarskoe Selo garrison, had trouble in dealing with his body:

During my stay in Tsarskoe Selo, several incidents occurred to which I would like to draw your attention. A few days after the arrest of the Imperial Family, a disagreeable incident concerning the body of Rasputin occurred. His corpse had been taken to Tsarskoe Selo where a church was being built, and his body was buried there. When the soldiers knew this they opened the grave, removed the cover of the coffin and examined the body. They found a Holy Image in the coffin which bore the signatures of 'Alexandra', 'Olga', 'Tatiana', 'Maria', 'Anastasia' and 'Anna' [*placed there by the Empress and her daughters at the time of Rasputin's burial: see p. 84 supra*]. This image was placed close to the right cheek of Rasputin. In some way this became known to the commandant of an anti-aircraft battery and he took the image away from the soldiers. I saw it myself. I think the image represented the Holy Virgin. I reported these facts by telephone to the district headquarters, and I was instructed to take the body of Rasputin to the station and to ship to Sredniaia-Rogatka, where it was to be interred. I was told to do this in secret. But it was impossible for me to carry out this order without the soldiers and the population knowing what had transpired. Later, I was told to take the body to Tsarskoe Selo station. This I did and had it put in a luggage van. I stationed some soldiers in another carriage, but I did not tell them what they had to guard.

The next day a Commissar by the name of Kupchinsky (who was also in charge of the automobiles) forwarded me a written order signed by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. The order stated that I was to transmit the body of Rasputin to Kupchinsky, so that he might take it away on a lorry to its destination. We could not do this in Tsarskoe Selo, so we shunted the luggage van containing the corpse to the station Pavlovsk Second. Here we found an old packing-case, into which we put the coffin containing Rasputin's body. The case was covered with mats and empty bags.

After the Tsar's abdication public tempers still ran high. The

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

day of the arrest of Nicholas II and Alexandra, Kerensky, the Minister of Justice, had to quell the passions of the Moscow Soviet. 'As general public prosecutor I have the power to decide the fate of Nicholas II. But, comrades, the Russian Revolution is unstained by bloodshed and I will not permit it to be disgraced. I refuse to be the Marat of the Russian Revolution.' Returning to Petrograd, Kerensky soon went to see the Royal Family in Tsarskoe Selo:

I remember clearly my first interview with the former Emperor, which took place at end of March, at the Aleksandrovskaia Palace. On my arrival at Tsarskoe Selo I inspected the entire palace thoroughly and inquired into the regulations of the guard and the general régime under which the Imperial Family was being kept. On the whole I approved of the situation, making only a few suggestions for improvement to the commandant of the palace. Then I asked Count Beckendorff, former Marshal of the Court, to inform the Tsar that I wished to see him and the Empress. The miniature court, composed of the few retainers who had not deserted the former monarch, still kept up the ceremonial. The old count, sporting a monocle, listened to me and answered: 'I will let His Majesty know.' He treated me as if I were someone come, as in the old days, to be presented to the Tsar, or a minister reporting for an audience. In a few moments he returned and announced solemnly: 'His Majesty has consented to receive you.' This seemed a trifle ridiculous and out of place, but I did not want to destroy the count's last illusions, so I did not explain to him that his manner was somewhat behind the times. He still considered himself First Marshal to His Majesty the Emperor. It was all they had left. I did not disturb it.

To tell the truth, I had been looking forward to the interview with the former Tsar with some anxiety, and feared I might lose my temper when I came face to face for the first time with the man I had always hated. Only the day before, leaving for Tsarskoe Selo, I had said to a member of the Provisional Government, apropos of the abolition of capital punishment: 'I think the only death warrant I could bear to sign would be that of Nicholas II.' But I was anxious that the ex-Emperor should meet with nothing but the most scrupulously correct treatment from me.

I was trying to pull myself together as we passed through an

interminable succession of apartments, preceded by a flunkey. At last we came to the children's rooms. Leaving me before the closed door leading into the inner apartments, the count went in to announce me. Returning almost immediately, he said: 'His Majesty invites you.' He threw open the door, himself remaining on the threshold.

My first glimpse of the scene, as I was approaching the Tsar, changed my mood altogether. The whole family was standing huddled in confusion around a small table near a window in the adjoining room. A small man in uniform detached himself from the group and moved forward to meet me, hesitating and smiling weakly. It was the Emperor. On the threshold of the room in which I awaited him he stopped, as if uncertain what to do next. He did not know what my attitude would be. Was he to receive me as host or should he wait until I spoke to him? Should he hold out his hand, or should he wait for my salutation? I sensed his embarrassment at once as well as the confusion of the whole family left alone with a terrible revolutionary. I quickly went up to Nicholas II, held out my hand with a smile, and said abruptly 'Kerensky', as I usually introduce myself. He shook my hand firmly, smiled, seemingly encouraged, and led me at once to his family. His son and daughters were obviously consumed with curiosity and gazed fixedly at me. Alexandra Feodorovna, stiff, proud and haughty, extended her hand reluctantly, as if under compulsion. Nor was I particularly eager to shake hands with her, our palms barely touching. This was typical of the difference in character and temperament between the husband and wife. I felt at once that Alexandra Feodorovna, though broken and angry, was a clever woman with a strong will. In those few seconds I understood the psychology of the whole tragedy that had been going on for many years behind the palace walls. My subsequent interviews with the Emperor, which were very few, only confirmed my first impression.

I inquired about the health of the members of the family, informed them that their foreign relatives [*especially the English Royal Family*] were solicitous about their welfare and promised to transmit, without delay, any communications they might wish to send to those relatives. I asked if they had any complaints to make, how the guards were behaving and whether they needed anything. I begged them not to be anxious or distressed

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

but to rely on me. They thanked me and I began to take my leave. Nicholas II inquired about the military situation and wished me success in my new and difficult office. Throughout the spring and summer he followed the war, reading the newspapers carefully and interrogating his visitors.

Kerensky left Tsarskoe Selo in thoughtful mood:

I do not know what impression Nicholas II would have made upon me had I seen him when he was still the monarch on the throne, but, when I first met him after the Revolution, I was struck chiefly by the fact that nothing about him suggested that only a month before so much had depended on his word. I left him with the firm determination of solving the riddle of this strange, terrible and ingratiating personality.

While the head of the Russian aristocracy was languishing in exile in Tsarskoe Selo, Petrograd society played out its remaining months of existence, hanging on the verge of doom. Paléologue, the French ambassador, notes:

On my way home I dropped in on Princess R—— on the Sergievskaja for tea.

The beautiful Madame D——, the 'Houdon Diana' or 'Tauride Diana', was there in a tailor-made and skunk toque, smoking cigarettes with the lady of the house. Prince B——, General S—— and a number of familiars came in one after the other. The stories told and impressions exchanged revealed the darkest pessimism.

But there was one anxiety greater than all the others, a haunting fear in every mind—the partition of the land.

'We shall not get out of it *this time*! What will become of us without our rent-rolls?'

To the Russian nobility, the rent-roll is of course the main, and often the only, source of income.

The company's forebodings comprised not only legal partition of the land, i.e. formal expropriation, but confiscation by the high hand, wholesale looting and *jacquerie*. I am certain that the same sort of conversation can be heard in every corner of Russia at the present time.

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

A fresh caller, a lieutenant in the *Chevaliers-Gardes*, entered the room, wearing the red favour on his tunic. He soothed the company's anxieties a little by telling them (supporting his argument with figures) that the agrarian question is not as terrifying as it seems at first sight.

'There's no need to have immediate recourse to our estates to take the edge off the peasants' hunger,' he said. 'With the crown lands, perhaps ninety-four million *desiatins* [*a desiatin is approximately one hectare*], the church and monastic lands, let's say three million *desiatins*, there's enough to keep the *moujiks* from gnawing-pains for quite a long time to come.'

His entire audience agreed with this argument; everyone consoled himself or herself with the thought that obviously the Russian nobility will not suffer too severely if the Emperor, Empress, Grand Dukes, Grand Duchesses, the Church and the monasteries are ruthlessly robbed and plundered. As Rochefoucauld said, 'We can always find strength to bear the misfortunes of others.'

I may remark in passing that one person present possesses an estate of 300,000 hectares in Volhynia!

When I returned to the embassy, I heard that there had been a ministerial crisis in France and Briand's place is being taken by Ribot.

*

This afternoon, the Volynskii regiment, formerly a regiment of the Guard, which was the first to revolt on March 12th and carried the rest of the garrison with it by its example, organized a concert at the Marie Theatre for the benefit of the victims of the Revolution. An extremely polite invitation was sent to the Ambassadors of France, England and Italy. We decided to turn up, to avoid the appearance of slighting the new regime; the Provisional Government was also present at the ceremony.

What an extraordinary change at the Marie Theatre! Would its clever stage-hands have succeeded in producing such an amazing transformation? All the imperial coats of arms and all the golden eagles have been removed. The box attendants had exchanged their sumptuous court liveries for miserable, dirty grey jackets.

The theatre was filled with an audience of bourgeois, students

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

and soldiers. A military orchestra occupied the stage; the men of the Volynskii regiment stood in groups behind.

We were ushered into the box on the left which was formerly the box of the Imperial Family, and in which I have so often seen the Grand Duke Boris, the Grand Duke Dimitri and the Grand Duke Andrew applauding Ksheshinskaia, Karsavina, Spesivtsiava or Smirnova. Opposite us, in the Minister of the Court's box, all the ministers were gathered, wearing nothing more impressive than frock-coats. I could not help thinking of old Count Fredericks, with his blaze of orders and his exquisite courtesy, who is now kept a prisoner in a hospital, sorely stricken with a disease of the bladder and obliged to submit to the most humiliating attentions in the presence of two gaolers. My thoughts went also to his wife, the worthy Countess Hedwig-Aloïsovna, who sought refuge in my embassy and is on her death-bed in an isolation hospital; to General Voeikov, Commandant of the Imperial Palaces, who is a prisoner in the Fortress, and to all the brilliant aides-de-camp, *gardes-à-cheval* and knight-guards, who are now dead or in captivity or flight.

But the real interest of the audience was concentrated on the great imperial box in the centre, the gala box. It was occupied by some thirty persons, old gentlemen and several old ladies with grave, worn, curiously expressive and unforgettable faces, who turned wondering eyes on the assembly. These were the heroes and heroines of terrorism who, scarcely three weeks ago, were living in exile in Siberia, or in the cells of Schlussemburg and the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul. Morozov, Lopatin, Vera Figner, Catherine Ismaïlovich, etc., were there. I shivered to think of all that the little party stood for in the way of physical suffering and moral torment, borne in silence and buried in oblivion. What an epilogue for Kropotkin's *Memoirs*, or Dostoïevsky's *Memories of the House of the Dead*!

The concert began with the Marseillaise, which is now the Russian national anthem. The theatre almost collapsed under the cheers and shouts of 'Long live the Revolution!' and 'Long live France!' was occasionally sent in my direction.

Then we had a long speech from the Minister of Justice, Kerensky; it was a clever speech in which the subject of the war was wrapped up in socialist phraseology. The orator's style was incisive and jerky; his gestures were few, impatient and im-

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

perious. He had a *succès fou* which made his pale, drawn features seem to light up with satisfaction.

In the interval which followed, Buchanan [*the British Ambassador*] said to me:

'Let's pay our respects to the Government box! It will look well.'

At the end of the interval we returned to our box. A murmur of sympathy and something like concentration passed through the theatre; it was a sort of silent ovation.

Vera Figner had appeared on the stage, in the conductor's place.

She was utterly unaffected, her grey hair coiled round her head, dressed in a black woollen gown with a white fichu, and looking like a very distinguished old lady. Nothing about her betrayed the fearsome nihilist she used to be in the days of her youth. She was of course of good family, connected with the nobility.

In calm, level tones, unaccompanied by any kind of gesture, and without a single outburst or the slightest trace of violence or emphasis, the acid note of vengeance or the pealing cry of victory, she reminded us of the countless army of obscure victims who have bought the present triumph of the Revolution with their lives, all those nameless ones who have succumbed in State prisons or the penal settlements of Siberia. The list of martyrs came forth like a litany or a piece of recitative. The concluding phrases, uttered more slowly, struck an indescribable note of sadness, resignation and pity. Perhaps the Slav soul alone is capable of that intensity. A funeral march which the orchestra at once began seemed a continuation of the speech, the pathetic effect of which thus culminated in religious emotion. Most of those present were reduced to tears.

We took advantage of this general emotion to withdraw as we were told that Chkheidze, the orator of the 'Labour' group, was about to speak against the war and that heated disputes, etc., might be anticipated. It was time to go. Besides, the ceremony had made a peculiarly poignant impression upon us: we did not want to spoil it.

In the empty passages through which I hastened I seemed to see the ghosts of my smart women friends who had so often been here to lull their restless minds with the novelties of the ballet,

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

and who were the last charm of a social system which has vanished for ever.

While Paléologue was engaged in the social rounds, taking tea with Petrograd society and visiting charity performances, less fortunate members of that society who had already felt the icy wind of revolution were trying to salvage what they could from the approaching storm. Kshesinskaia, the ballerina who had been the idol of the court and of Nicholas in particular, suddenly found herself evicted from the splendid house that she had been given by the Tsar. The Bolsheviks were using it as their headquarters. Kshesinskaia went along to beg Sukhanov for his help:

I was called out into the vestibule, where, I was told, a 'lady', from Kerensky, was asking for me. I started for the door, but the agitated lady, a small black-clad figure, had already come into the almost empty Executive Committee room. She was accompanied by an imposing, resplendently dressed gentleman with magnificent moustaches and a typical commercial traveller's face.

This elegant and no longer young woman, holding out a piece of paper towards me, began, halting and stammering, a timid and quite inarticulate speech about how Kerensky had sent her to me, and given her this paper, how she was now completely at liberty, not under arrest, how her innocence, honesty, and lack of interest in politics were completely established, etc. Not understanding what it was all about, I involuntarily looked questioningly at her companion, who bowed and said:

'This is Madame Kshesinskaia, *artiste* of the Imperial theatres. I am her agent. . . .'

I was afraid that the once-powerful ballerina would burst into tears as a result of all the shocks she had endured, and attempted to soothe her, assuring her that absolutely nothing was threatening her and that everything possible would be done for her. But what was it all about?

It turned out that she had come to intercede for her house, which had been requisitioned by right of revolution and was being plundered, according to her, by a vast mob staying in it. Kshesinskaia was asking that her possessions at the least be put together and sealed up in some corner of the house, and that a place be assigned to her to live in her house.

A difficult affair. I was violently hostile to all seizures, unauthorized requisitions, and all separatist-anarchist action. As a Leftist I never had anything against the most radical measures by law and the most radical changes in the law; but I was resolutely hostile to lawlessness and to law-making by anybody who felt like it. In this respect I was prepared to go further than many Rightists and frequently made thoughtful Soviet politicians remark that there was chaos and muddle in my head, that for some reason I tossed back and forth between Right and Left, that I was an unreliable man and you never knew what I would do next.

I fought against private seizures of houses and businesses as much as I could, but I didn't have much success. In the first place the principle collided with the crying needs of the new organizations that had sprung up, which had a right to exist. Secondly, the principle was unconvincing, not only to the Left but also to many people in the Centre, and individual and arbitrary action by right of revolution was taken far and wide. I was not the only one to be shocked, for instance, by the imprint of our *Izvestiia*: 'Printing-Plant of the *Izvestiia* of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies'; it was there without any order, agreement, or basis whatever. The printing-plant belonged to someone else. But we could do nothing about it.

Kshesinskaia's business was difficult, and I didn't know how to help her. I asked: 'Where is your house?'

Kshesinskaia seemed to be somewhat offended. How could I not know the famous palace, the magnetic focus of the Romanovs?

'On the Embankment,' she replied; 'you can see it from Trinity Bridge, you know . . .'

'Come now!' added the 'agent': 'the house is very well known in Petersburg.'

I had to look embarrassed, and pretend that I too was familiar with it. 'And who has occupied it?'

'It's been occupied by the—Socialist-Revolutionary—Bolsheviks.'

Kshesinskaia obviously pronounced these difficult words thinking they were the most terrible things in the whole world. But what could be done? And why was it me she had been sent to?

I stopped Shliapnikov, who was hurrying by. The house had

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

been occupied by the Bolsheviks. Was there looting? Nonsense—all the valuable objects had been given up to the owner. Why and on what grounds had the house been occupied without authorization? Shliapnikov burst out laughing and hurried off. . . .

I promised to bring up the question in the Executive Committee and do everything possible to regularize the matter of the premises. We would hope—but it was evident that neither she nor I could hope for anything.

The March Days had caught the Bolsheviks unawares. Nearly all the Bolshevik leaders were either abroad or exiled in Siberia at the time. As a result, the Bolshevik Central Committee in Petrograd decided to play safe for the moment. It advised the workers to elect their representatives to the Provisional Government and pretended to be the loyal opposition rather than a revolutionary party bent on sweeping aside all other political groups.

The first Lenin heard of the March Revolution was in his rooms in Zurich. His only thought was how to get to Petrograd as soon as possible. Ironically enough, his movements were opposed, not by the Russian Provisional Government, but by the English and French authorities, who did not wish to give him a transit visa, as they considered that his arrival in Petrograd would inevitably lead to a deterioration of the political situation there and give an additional fillip to the invading German armies. In the event, Lenin travelled to Petrograd in a sealed railway coach provided by the Germans.

He was seen off at Zurich by large numbers of Russian émigrés and a motley group of workers. Accompanied by Krupskaya, his wife, and a small party of Bolsheviks and non-Bolsheviks (the latter went with him to cover up the strong German-Bolshevik connection in the travel arrangements), Lenin watched his supporters singing the 'Internationale' as he boarded the train. They were howled down by anti-German Socialists shouting 'Spies! German spies! Look how happy they are—going home at the Kaiser's expense!'

When the train left the city, Lenin looked out of the window at the impressive Swiss scenery. One of his comrades remarked sadly: 'We shall probably never see these mountains again.'

Lenin appeared not to have heard. 'Vladimir Il'ich is imagining himself as Premier of the Revolutionary Government,' said another. Lenin smiled.

At the Finland Station in Petrograd Lenin was met by Bolshevik sympathizers and hardly anyone else, except for the Socialist Revolutionary Sukhanov, whom we have already met, and the Mensheviks Chkheidze and Skobelev. Chkheidze, fearful of the effect of Lenin's arrival on the revolutionary fervour of the Bolsheviks, gave Lenin a distinctly cool reception, if we are to believe Sukhanov's account:

The throng in front of the Finland Station blocked the whole square, making movement almost impossible and scarcely letting the trams through. The innumerable red flags were dominated by a magnificent banner embroidered in gold: 'The Central Committee of the R.S. Bolsheviks.' Troops with bands were drawn up under the red flags near the side entrance, in the former imperial waiting-rooms.

There was a throbbing of many motor-cars. In two or three places the awe-inspiring outlines of armoured cars thrust up from the crowd. And from one of the side-streets there moved out on to the square, startling the mob and cutting through it, a strange monster—a mounted searchlight, which abruptly projected upon the bottomless void of the darkness tremendous strips of the living city, the roofs, many-storeyed houses, columns, wires, tramways, and human figures.

Various delegations that had failed to penetrate into the station had found places on the steps of the main entrance and were vainly trying to retain their composure and keep their places in hand-to-hand struggles with the 'private' public. Lenin's train was expected around 11.

There was a crush inside the station—more delegations, more flags, and sentries at every step demanding special authority for going any further. The title of member of the Executive Committee [of the Soviet], however, appeased the most conscientious watchdogs, and through the mass of discontentedly grumbling people tightly packed together I made my way right through the station to a platform, and towards the Tsar's waiting-room, where a dejected Chkheidze sat, weary of the long wait and reacting sluggishly to Skobelev's witticisms. The whole square

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

was clearly visible through the heavily bolted glass doors of the 'imperial' waiting-room; the scene was extraordinarily impressive. 'Delegates' were enviously clinging to the outside of the windows, and discontented women's voices could be heard: 'Party people have to wait in the street, while they let people inside that nobody ever saw before!'

But the indignation was scarcely well-founded: I don't recall seeing any 'public', at all well known in politics, science, or literature, that was not Bolshevik. The parties hadn't sent their official representatives; indeed, of the Soviet people or Executive Committee members, besides the Praesidium, specially detailed to go, I think there was only myself. In any case there weren't more than three or four people in the 'imperial' rooms besides ourselves, since the local Bolshevik commanders had gone to meet Lenin in Finland. While we were waiting for Lenin at the station, he in the train was already familiarizing himself thoroughly with the state of affairs from 'immediate sources'.

I passed along the platform. There it was even more festive than in the square. Its whole length was lined with people, mostly soldiers ready to 'present A-a-a-r-m-s!' Banners hung across the platform at every step; triumphal arches had been set up, adorned with red and gold; one's eyes were dazzled by every possible welcoming inscription and revolutionary slogan, while at the end of the platform, where the carriage was expected to stop, there was a band, and a group of representatives of the central Bolshevik organizations stood holding flowers.

The Bolsheviks, who shone at organization, and always aimed at emphasizing externals and putting on a good show, had dispensed with any superfluous modesty and were plainly preparing a real triumphal entry.

*

We [*Sukhanov, Skobelev and Chkheidze*] waited for a long time, the train was very late.

But at long last it arrived. A thunderous Marseillaise boomed forth on the platform, and shouts of welcome rang out. We stayed in the imperial waiting-room while the Bolshevik generals exchanged greetings. Then we heard them marching along the platform, under the triumphal arches, to the sound of the band, and between the rows of welcoming troops and workers. The gloomy Chkheidze, and the rest of us after him, got up, went to

the middle of the room, and prepared for the meeting. And what a meeting it was worthy of—more than my wretched pen!

Shliapnikov, acting as master of ceremonies, appeared in the doorway, portentously hurrying, with the air of a faithful old police chief announcing the Governor's arrival. Without any apparent necessity he kept crying out fussily: 'Please, Comrades, please! Make way there! Make way there! Comrades make way!'

Behind Shliapnikov, at the head of a small cluster of people behind whom the door slammed again at once, Lenin came, or rather ran, into the room. He wore a round cap, his face looked frozen, and there was a magnificent bouquet in his hands. Running to the middle of the room, he stopped in front of Chkheidze as though colliding with a completely unexpected obstacle. And Chkheidze, still glum, pronounced the following 'speech of welcome' with not only the spirit and wording but also the tone of a sermon:

'Comrade Lenin, in the name of the Petersburg Soviet and of the whole Revolution we welcome you to Russia. . . . But—we think that the principal task of the revolutionary democracy is now the defence of the Revolution from any encroachments either from within or from without. We consider that what this goal requires is not disunion, but the closing of the democratic ranks. We hope you will pursue these goals together with us.'

Chkheidze stopped speaking. I was dumbfounded with surprise: really, what attitude could be taken to this 'welcome' and to that delicious 'But——'?

But Lenin plainly knew exactly how to behave. He stood there as though nothing taking place had the slightest connection with him—looking about him, examining the persons round him and even the ceiling of the imperial waiting-room, adjusting his bouquet (rather out of tune with his whole appearance), and then, turning away from the Executive Committee delegation altogether, he made this 'reply':

'Dear Comrades, soldiers, sailors, and workers! I am happy to greet in your persons the victorious Russian revolution, and greet you as the vanguard of the world-wide proletarian army. . . . The piratical imperialist war is the beginning of civil war throughout Europe. . . . The hour is not far distant when . . . the peoples will turn their arms against their own capitalist ex-

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

plotters. . . . The world-wide Socialist revolution has already dawned. . . . Germany is seething. . . . Any day now the whole of European capitalism may crash. The Russian revolution accomplished by you has prepared the way and opened a new epoch. Long live the world-wide Socialist revolution !'

This was really no reply to Chkheidze's 'welcome', and it entirely failed to echo the 'context' of the Russian revolution as accepted by everyone, without distinction, of its witnesses and participants.

It was very interesting ! Suddenly, before the eyes of all of us, completely swallowed up by the routine drudgery of the Revolution, there was presented a bright, blinding, exotic beacon, obliterating everything we 'lived by'. Lenin's voice, heard straight from the train, was a 'voice from outside'. There had broken in upon us in the Revolution a note that was not, to be sure, a contradiction, but that was novel, harsh, and somewhat deafening.

Let us admit that essentially Lenin was right a thousand times over. Personally I was convinced that he was quite right, not only in recognizing the beginning of the world-wide Socialist revolution and establishing an unbreakable connection between the World War and the crash of the imperialist system, but in maintaining that we had to steer towards world revolution and evaluate all contemporary historical events in its light. All this was beyond question.

But it was far from enough. It was not enough to acclaim the world-wide Socialist revolution : we had to understand what practical use to make of this idea in our revolutionary policy. If we didn't then the proclamation of the world-wide proletarian revolution would not merely be completely abstract, empty, and futile, but would obscure all the real perspectives and be extremely harmful.

In any case it was all very interesting !

The official and public part of the welcome was over. The crowd, burning with impatience, envy, and indignation, was already trying to break through the glass doors from the square. It was noisily and insistently demanding that the newly-arrived leader should come out to it in the street. Shliapnikov again cleared a way for Lenin, shouting : 'Comrades, please ! Make way there !'

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

To another Marseillaise, and to the shouts of the throng of thousands, among the red-and-gold banners illuminated by the searchlight, Lenin went out by the main entrance and was about to get into a closed car, but the crowd absolutely refused to allow this. Lenin clambered on to the bonnet of the car and had to make a speech.

‘. . . any part in shameful imperialist slaughter . . . lies and frauds . . . capitalist pirates . . .’ was what I could hear, squeezed in the doorway and vainly trying to get out on to the square to hear the first speech ‘to the people’ of this new star of the first magnitude on our revolutionary horizon.

Then I think Lenin had to change to an armoured car and in it, preceded by the searchlight and accompanied by the band, flags, workers’ detachments, army units, and an enormous crowd of ‘private’ people, proceed to the Sampson Bridge and over to the Petersburg side, to the Bolshevik headquarters—the palace of Kshesinskaia, the ballerina. From the top of the armoured car Lenin ‘conducted a service’ at practically every street-crossing, making new speeches to continually changing audiences. The procession made slow progress. The triumph had come off brilliantly, and even quite symbolically.

After his troubles in America, Trotsky eventually followed Lenin and many lesser Bolsheviks to Russia, where Sukhanov noticed him on May 18th, the day after his arrival, speaking to the Executive Committee of the Soviet on his pet subject, the future international revolution. His fiery ardour upset Chkheidze just as Lenin’s had done:

The next day in the Executive Committee I caught a passing glimpse of a new face. Familiar piercing eyes, familiar wavy hair, but an unfamiliar little beard. Well—Trotsky! He had arrived unnoticed during this turmoil. Fifteen years before, in 1902-3, I had often met him in Paris and listened to the papers he read. But I didn’t know him. Before the Revolution he had sent things to the *Letopis’*, and now he was one of the contributors to the *Novaia Zhizn’*. But it was just in order to avoid talking about his work on the *Novaia Zhizn’* that I didn’t go over to him and introduce myself. First I had to discover what his position was in the present circumstances.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The official speakers didn't arouse much interest. While they were speaking, I was sitting at a table on the platform, toiling in the sweat of my brow over a leading article for next day's issue of the *Novaia Zhizn'*—on our attitude to the new Government. But I couldn't get on. . . . Accidentally turning around I saw Trotsky behind me. Chkheidze, behaving differently from the way he behaved with his friends, ignored Trotsky's appearance and didn't propose a welcome to the distinguished revolutionary, who had, moreover, just returned from imprisonment. But Trotsky had already been pointed out, and the hall resounded with cries of: 'Trotsky! We want Comrade Trotsky!'

It was the famous orator's first appearance on a revolutionary tribune. He was warmly greeted. And, with characteristic brilliance, he made his first speech—on the Russian Revolution and its influence in Europe and overseas. He spoke of proletarian solidarity and the international struggle for peace; but he also touched on the Coalition. In mild and cautious terms, not characteristic of him, he pointed out the practical fruitlessness and erroneousness in principle of the step that had now been taken. He called the Coalition a capture of the Soviet by the bourgeoisie, but he didn't think the mistake very serious.

Trotsky was visibly disturbed at this *début* under the neutral gaze of an unknown crowd and to the accompaniment of the hostile exclamations of a couple of dozen 'Social-traitors'. From the outset he did not expect any sympathy. And to make it worse—his cuff kept constantly shooting out of his sleeve and threatening to fall on the heads of his nearest listeners. Trotsky kept on settling it back in place, but the wilful cuff would shoot out again—and it distracted and irritated him.

On March 16th, the day after the Tsar's abdication, the Provisional Government announced that a Constituent Assembly would be convened in order to establish a new political structure, end the war and distribute the land. The opening date of the Assembly was continually delayed, however, and it did not meet until January 1918. As a result the public lost all confidence in the Government and opinion gradually swung to the left under the whip of the Bolsheviks. But in the spring of 1917 the Provisional Government was controlled by the right-wing Cadets and the Octobrists [see the Glossary], whilst the Petrograd

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

Soviet was still formed of a majority of Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks [see the Glossary], with the ultra-left Bolsheviks in the minority. In May, after the resignation from the Provisional Government of right-wing leaders Miliukov and Guchkov, the Socialist Revolutionaries wielded much more power in the First Coalition, as the new Government was called. One of their leaders was Kerensky, who became Minister for War.

Immediately after his return to Russia, Lenin launched a campaign to put the Bolsheviks in power. In his 'April Theses' he explained that before 1917 he had expected the Revolution to bring in either a 'bourgeois dictatorship' or a 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry', i.e. Bolshevik rule. In the event the March Days had produced the Provisional Government ('bourgeois dictatorship') and the Soviets ('democratic dictatorship') working side by side, though often in conflict with each other. Moreover the Soviets were in the hands of the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, whose policies were not as extreme as that of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Lenin set himself two objects. First, the Provisional Government had to be eliminated and all power given to the Soviets. Second, the Soviets themselves would have to be taken over by Bolshevik majorities.

After some initial hesitation, Lenin persuaded his fellow Bolsheviks in Petrograd to adopt his course, and Trotsky threw his weight on to Lenin's side. Lenin's extremist stand of April widened the gap between the liberals and the radical revolutionaries, so that it was impossible for Kerensky to dabble in both camps, as we saw him doing during the March Days. The Bolshevik revolution was gathering momentum.

However the first All-Russian Congress of the Soviets held in Petrograd in June still returned a majority for the Socialist Revolutionaries, with the Mensheviks in second place and the Bolsheviks in the minority. The first item on the agenda was a resolution of confidence in the First Coalition Government set up in May. Of all the main parties, only the Bolsheviks had refused to join in the Coalition on the grounds that they would thus be betraying the workers and peasants whom they represented. The Socialist Revolutionary leader Victor Chernov had accepted a post as Minister of Agriculture, and the brilliant Menshevik

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Tseretelli had become Minister of Posts and Telegraphs. Listen to Lenin quarrelling with them on the opening day of the Congress, as recorded by Philips Price:

There now arose from an obscure corner of the room a thick-set little man with a round bald head and small Tartar eyes. He was leading a small group of delegates who had set themselves down on the extreme left and at the back of the hall. Nobody seemed to pay much attention to the corner where they sat, for there was a general impression that here had congregated the extremists, irreconcilables and faddists of all types, who were forming a little 'cave of Adullam'. But as soon as this short, thick-set little man rose and strode with firm step, and even firmer look upon his countenance, up the gangway, where sat the serried ranks of the 'Revolutionary Democracy', a hush came upon the whole assembly. For it was Lenin, the leader of that small, insignificant Bolshevik minority at this First All-Russian Soviet Congress. No uncertain words came from his lips. Straight to the point he went from the first moment of his speech and pursued his opponents with merciless logic. 'Where are we?' he began, stretching out his short arms and looking questioningly at his audience. 'What is this Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates? Is there anything like it in the world? No, of course not, because nothing so absurd as this exists in any country today except in Russia. Then let us have either one of two things: either a bourgeois Government with its plans of so-called social reforms on paper, such as exists in every country now, or let us have that Government which you (pointing to Tseretelli) seemed to long for, but which you apparently have not the courage to bring into existence, a Government of the proletariat which had its historic parallel in 1792 in France.

'Look at this anarchy, which we now have in Russia,' he went on. 'What does it mean? Do you really think you can create a socialist form of society with the assistance of the capitalists? Can Tseretelli's fine plan for persuading the bourgeois governments of Western Europe to come to our point of view on the peace settlement ever succeed? No, it will fail ignominiously, as long as power is not in the hands of the Russian proletariat. Look at what you are doing,' he cried, pointing a scornful finger at the Socialist Ministers: 'Capitalists with 800 per cent war profits

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

are walking about the country just as if they were under Tsarism. Why don't you publish figures of their profits, arrest some of them and keep them locked up for a bit, even though you may keep them under the same luxurious conditions as you keep Nicholas Romanov. You talk about peace without annexations. Put that principle into practice here in Finland and in the Ukraine. You talk to us of an offensive on the front against the Germans. We are not against war on principle. We are only against a capitalist war fought for capitalist ends, and until you take the government entirely into your hands and oust the bourgeois you are only the tools of those who have brought this disaster upon the world.' And so saying he returned to his obscure corner amidst yells of delight from his followers and derisive laughter from the delegates of the 'Revolutionary Democracy'.

There was then another hush in the hall, as there rose up a short man with a square face and close-cropped hair. He wore a brown jacket and gaiters, his face was pale with nervous tension and his eyes blazed like fiery beads. It was Kerensky, the popular hero of the moment who was believed to be about to lead the Russian Revolution to the successful realization of its ideals, who was expected to bring land to the hungry peasants, land and peace to the weary soldiers without annexations or indemnities. Standing bolt upright with his right arm clasping the button of his breast pocket, he began his speech in quiet measured tones. 'We have just been given some historical parallels,' he said. 'We have been referred to 1792 as an example of how we should carry out the Revolution of 1917. But how did the French Republic of 1792 end? It turned into a base Imperialism, which set back the progress of democracy for many a long year. Our duty is to prevent this very thing from happening so that our comrades who have just come back from exile in Siberia shall not have to go back there, and so that that comrade,' he said, pointing a scornful finger at Lenin, 'who has been living all this time in safety in Switzerland, shall not have to fly back there. He proposes a new and wonderful recipe for our Revolution: we are to arrest a handful of Russian capitalists. Comrades! I am not a Marxist, but I think I understand Socialism better than Comrade Lenin, and I know that Karl Marx never proposed such methods of Oriental despotism. I am accused of opposing national aspirations in Finland and the Ukraine and of reducing the principle

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

of peace without annexations to ridicule by my action in the Coalition Government. But in the first Duma it was he,' he said, turning savagely on Lenin, 'who attacked me when I stood up for a federal republic and national autonomy; it was he who called the Socialist Revolutionaries and Trudoviks [*the party led by Kerensky in the Duma*] dreamers and Utopianists.'

Turning to the point about fraternizing on the front, he evoked a storm of laughter by referring to the naïve people who imagined that by friendly meetings between a few parties of German and Russian soldiers it is possible to usher in the dawn of Socialism throughout the world. 'They will have to be careful,' he added, 'or else they will find out one day that they are fraternizing with the mailed fist of William Hohenzollern.' His face flushed, and his voice became harsher with excitement, as he braced himself up for his peroration. 'You will tell us that you fear reaction,' he almost screamed, 'and yet you propose to lead us the way of France in 1792. Instead of appealing for reconstruction, you clamour for destruction. Out of the fiery chaos that you wish to make will arise, like a Phoenix, a dictator.' He paused and walked slowly across the platform till he was opposite the corner where the group surrounding Lenin was seated. Not a sound was heard in the hall, as we waited breathlessly for the next sentence. 'I will not be the dictator that you are trying to create,' and so saying he turned his back upon Lenin. The latter was calmly stroking his chin, apparently wondering whether the words of Kerensky would come true, and on whose shoulders the cloak of dictatorship, if it came, would rest.

The debate was continued by the leader of the Socialist Revolutionaries, Victor Chernov. 'Comrades,' he began, 'the tragedy of the Russian Revolution is the insufferable circumstances in which it was born. It is surrounded by the fiery ring of war. It has established its political position at home. Can it secure its international position abroad? For we see that the longer the war goes on the greater becomes its economic difficulties. The war is a great pump which sucks out the strength of the country. Here is the danger, and one all the greater because no one knows if the Revolution can live through it.'

He then proceeded to dissect the argument of Lenin and to show that his idea of social revolution throughout the world was too feeble a reed for the Russian Revolution to lean upon. There

was reason to think that in the lands where capitalism was firmly established the revolutionary movement was hanging fire, while in economically underdeveloped countries it had gone furiously ahead. 'We cannot remove these circumstances by a single appeal to the world,' he continued, 'nor ought we to look upon capitalism as a purely economic phenomenon. The history of recent years shows that capitalism has a very strong national character, and that its influence has penetrated the proletariat of many countries. If this be so, does not a serious question arise? Will the Russian Revolution spread outside the narrow limits of its national existence? or will it spend its energy and expire? or can it, by strengthening itself at home, wait till the time is ripe in the rest of the world? Can it, in other words, give an object lesson to the comrades in other lands? The world has been astonished by our Revolution in the midst of the war. Let us astonish the world still further by the later stages of its growth. The Russian Revolution is acting as a lever which is slowly moving the forces of Socialism throughout the world, and by its summons to the International it will lay the foundations of a peace, freed from all traces of Imperialism. It will destroy the old methods of secret diplomacy and secret treaties and make it no longer possible for millions to be slaughtered for the benefit of the few. Our hope is no longer in diplomatic embassies but in the democracy of the Allied countries. The next task which the Russian Revolutionary Democracy will accomplish is the meeting of the Socialist International of all countries.' And with these words the whole audience, with the exception of the little irreconcilable group in the obscure corner of the hall, rose to their feet and cheered the Socialist Revolutionary leader for several minutes. The President rang his bell, and the assembled Soviet delegates filed out for the division. The resolution of confidence in the Coalition Government was passed by a majority of 543 to 126. The Block of the 'Revolutionary' Democracy in the Soviet was thus secured.

The conduct of the war provided a gloomy backdrop to the drama being enacted in Petrograd. The appalling muddle already existing before the March revolution was intensified thereafter. The troops' remaining morale disappeared as a result of the notorious Order No. 1 issued by the Bolsheviki on March 14th.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

From then on the army ceased to be a fighting power and became an instrument of the Bolsheviks for promoting the Revolution. General Boldyrev, Quartermaster-General to General Ruzsky, the Commander of the Northern Front, noted the effect of Order No. 1 on the troops:

March 18th, 1917

The propaganda of dissension between officers and lower ranks is spreading all along the front. . . . General Ushakov, Chief of the Garrison, had been arrested; the troops had been called on parade, of which I had not the slightest idea; called out unarmed, looking like a disorderly collection of rag-tag-and-bob-tail soldiers. I asked why all this had been done: was it necessary to emphasize the fact that the soldiers were not trusted? The Commandant, who had just been put under arrest, was responsible for the muddle.

Rumours flew about that a huge crowd had gathered on the parade-ground, that tempers ran high, and that General Ushakov was being dragged to the river.

A feeling of excitement was noticeable also in the reception room of the Commander-in-Chief: orderly officer General E. was muttering something to himself; the bewildered Mitzkevich [*the Commandant*] looked frightfully haggard; and D. was distracting Ruzsky with some long telegram.

Having obtained Ruzsky's permission on my way out, I jumped into the first car that offered itself, and raced to the square, all the time considering the possibility of grave complications. Both sides of the tramway were lined with garrison troops, of whom only the cadets, the ensigns of the military college, the transport platoons and the field gendarmes looked anything like normal; the rest had hardly the semblance of disciplined troops. Here and there I caught a glimpse of groups of students.

All around, a seething mass of heads turned in my direction. Something had to be done to break the evil spell. I jumped out of the car and, walking briskly, saluted right and left. The first return of the salute made me realize that as yet I was dealing with real troops.

Red ribbons, and flags with the inscription 'Hail! free Russia', were to be seen on all sides. Having congratulated the troops upon the establishment of the new political order, I shouted 'Long live Russia!' A shattering 'Hurrah!' rent the air. I had

found an outlet for the unbearable tension—the crowd roared together with the soldiers. One felt that this delirious crowd, strained to the last stages of endurance, was at that moment capable either of crime or of heroic deeds.

After a few friendly words, I announced that the Commander-in-Chief would be surprised to find the troops on parade without arms, and that in his name I ordered their immediate dispersal to quarters, and their reassembly here in the usual parade order. 'I hope that the populace will undertake the preservation of order during the parade.'

The reply was a thundering 'Hurrah!' Parties began to sort themselves and file away to barracks; the general stir had a calming effect—an outlet for the accumulated energy had been found. I returned to Ruzsky with my report, and then we all went to the parade-ground. I had to take command of the parade. Time and again I inwardly thanked Heaven for my loud voice: in dealing with a crowd it is a great asset, and the majority of the troops of the 'new order' differed little from an ordinary crowd. Ruzsky spoke to the soldiers on the theme of the new political organization, and of the necessity for co-ordinated and steady work. . . . Magnificently embroidered red banners mingled everywhere with ragged pieces of red cloth attached to a simple stick, carried by old peasants dressed up as soldiers. Ruzsky spoke calmly, warmly, in a fatherly fashion. I do not think that many understood him; but he is liked, and at his departure he was greeted by an ovation from both the troops and the people.

In the evening, disorder broke out afresh. Admiral Kolomitsev was seized and was literally dragged under arrest in his car. Such incidents make one feel that the authority of the Commander-in-Chief has sunk to zero. An Admiral, a Knight of the Cross of St George, to be dragged and insulted by soldiers, and the Commander-in-Chief powerless to intervene! Power belongs to the soldier, and he uses it as his new leaders dictate. In a word, we are hanging over the abyss of anarchy.

Russia went from defeat to defeat. Returning to Petrograd from the front at the end of April, Bernard Pares observed the condition of the Russian army:

Already desertion had set in wholesale. In very few cases did the

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

men leave the front trenches, but as soon as they were moved into the reserve they decamped in a body. Young students commanding thin extended lines of front could not possibly stop them. The movement was something elemental. They packed even the roofs of the railway carriages. My good friend, Mewes of the *Daily Mirror*, sent over a photograph of such a scene, which was published in England under the title, 'Russian troops hasten to the front!' When held up and challenged, the men sometimes stopped in their flight. . . .

I asked that arrangements should be made to keep our motor column close to our field hospital, so that our people should have their own means of transport in the general break-up. There was not likely to be any successful fighting. The root of the mischief was in Petrograd, and while the news which reached us continued to be very sinister, we were not able to understand what was really happening. My hope that the army would serve as a support of order had already been ruined—not at the front itself but from the rear. It was near the end of April. It was high time to return to the field of politics, with which I was more familiar. Sheer disorder had already made great progress. . . .

In the train for Kiev I met a number of officers of my dear Third Caucasian Corps. They were broken-hearted. 'Think!' they said, 'Just when we knew there would be victory in the spring. And then everything gone to pieces!' In Kiev I found General Bredov, my host in the Romenskii Regiment at Tarnov; later he had been Quartermaster-General of the northern front, and now he was Chief of Staff in Kiev. He told me that already there were two million deserters. 'These people don't know what they are doing,' he said. 'They have not got heads now, only hearts. Some day they will turn round and be utterly ashamed of it all.'

I was travelling with Peter Keeble, of the British motor column. Between them, General Bredov and the commandant of the station arranged for us to have a compartment reserved, but though it was locked it had been rushed before it reached the station; lots of people had keys of their own. We managed to keep one of the two berths, and I slept on the floor; we thought of letting down the support of the top berth and dislodging the intruder, but we decided to leave him, and he got out soon. Before we started, Keeble had bought a chicken and a few other eatables, and these lasted us the thirty-odd hours to Petrograd.

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

We could not possibly leave the compartment, and as it was there were several attempts to rush it in the course of the night. Now and then Keeble would open the door sharply and say: 'Angliskii ofitsér', which always had an effect. In the middle of the night I looked out into the corridor. It was a remarkable sight: innumerable passengers squatting on their haunches, half asleep; they looked like mushrooms. Notices were posted up at the stations saying that every deserter was a traitor to the Revolution, but no one even looked at them. Our rations only just held out; we divided the last remains at Tsarskoe Selo; the station was a mass of red flags, and everything was dingy and dirty. At the terminus the cabmen seemed not even sure that they wanted any passengers.

Kerensky, now Minister of War, realized that the inefficient management of the war had been one of the chief causes of dismissal of the first Provisional Government in May. Shortly after the formation of the First Coalition he began to make frantic and highly melodramatic appeals to the Russian civilian population to put its back into the war effort. This speech, heard by Bruce Lockhart in Moscow, was typical both of Kerensky as a man and of the hysterical climate of the time:

How well I remember his first visit to Moscow. It was, I think, soon after he had been made Minister for War. He had just returned from a visit to the front. He spoke in the Big Theatre—the platform on which, later, the Bolsheviks ratified the Peace of Brest-Litovsk. Kerensky, however, was the first politician to speak from that famous stage, which has given to the world Shaliapin, Sobinov, Geltzer, Mordkin and scores of other famous dancers and singers. On this occasion the huge amphitheatre was packed from top to bottom. In Moscow the embers of Russian patriotism were still warm, and Kerensky had come to stir them into flame again. Generals, high officials, bankers, great industrialists, merchants, accompanied by their wives, occupied the parterre and first balcony boxes. On the stage the representatives of the Soldiers' Councils. A small pulpit had been erected in the foreground of the stage just above the prompter's trapdoor. There was the usual ten minutes' delay, the customary rumours among the audience. Alexander Feodorovich [Kerensky] was ill. A new crisis had

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

recalled him to St Petersburg. Then the buzz of conversation gave place to a burst of clapping, and from the wings the pale figure of the War Minister made its way to the central dais. The audience rose to him. Kerensky held up his hand and plunged straight into his speech. He looked ill and tired. He drew himself up to his full height, as if calling up his last reserves of energy. Then, with an ever-increasing flow of words, he began to expound his gospel of suffering. Nothing that was worth having could be achieved without suffering. Man himself was born into this world of suffering. The greatest of all revolutions in history had begun on the Cross of Calvary. Was it to be supposed that their own revolution was to be consolidated without suffering? They had a legacy of appalling difficulties left to them by the Tsarist régime: disorganized transport, lack of bread, lack of fuel. Yet the Russian people knew how to suffer. He had just returned from the trenches. He had seen men who had been living for months on end with mud and water up to their knees. Lice crawled over them. For days they had had nothing but a crust of black bread for sustenance. They were without the proper equipment for their self-defence. They had not seen their womenfolk for months. Yet they made no complaint. They had promised to do their duty to the end. It was only in St. Petersburg and in Moscow that he heard grumbling. And from whom? From the rich, from those who, in their silks and ornaments of gold, came here today to listen to him in comfort. He raised his eyes to the balcony boxes, while with fierce staccato sentences he lashed himself into a passion. Were they to bring Russia down in ruins, to be guilty of the most shameful betrayal in history, while the poor and humble, who had every reason to complain, were still holding out? He was ashamed at the apathy of the big cities. What had they done to be tired! Could they not watch a little longer? He had come to Moscow for a message for the men in the trenches. Was he to go back and say that their effort was in vain because 'the heart of Russia' was now peopled by men of little faith?

As he finished his peroration he sank back exhausted into the arms of his aide-de-camp. In the limelight his face had the pallor of death. Soldiers assisted him off the stage, while in a frenzy of hysteria the whole audience rose and cheered itself hoarse. The man with one kidney—the man who had only six weeks to live—would save Russia yet. A millionaire's wife threw her pearl

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

necklace on to the stage. Every woman present followed her example, and a hail of jewellery descended from every tier of the huge house. In the box next to me, General Vogak, a man who had served the Tsar all his life and who hated the Revolution as the pest, wept like a child. It was an epic performance—more impressive in its emotional reactions than any speech of Hitler or of any orator I have ever heard. The speech had lasted for two hours. Its effect on Moscow and the rest of Russia lasted exactly two days.

On July 1st an offensive was launched against the Austrians in Galicia, but it had come to a halt by July 14th. An Austro-German counter-attack pierced the Russian front with remarkable ease. Desertion spread like wildfire along the lines; the back of the Russian Army was almost completely broken. Yet patriotism was still not entirely dead in the national breast, as is shown by this cutting from one of the Petrograd papers, probably the Novoe Vremia, which appeared near the end of July:

We print today a letter of a son to his mother . . . who has sent to the front her two sons as army officers and an only daughter as a nurse.

After graduating from the university at the time of the outbreak of war, the older son joined the army as a volunteer. He was wounded three times. While he was convalescing from the injuries . . . news reached Petrograd of the tragic situation at the front [*the July disasters in Galicia*]. Without telling his mother, the young man enlisted in the 'Battalion of Death' and two days later set out once more for the front. On his departure he left the following letter :

My dear Mother :

You will read this on your return from the station and when the train is bearing me away from you. Why am I writing this? To keep you from being so lonely at home. Mother, dear, my soul is in this letter, it is now with you, and you are no longer lonely. The purpose of my letter is, first, to tell you this, and secondly, to try again to explain my act.

Recall, dear mother, the beginning of the war and why I then enlisted as a volunteer. There were two reasons or, to be

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

more accurate, many reasons, but two stand out: namely, first, to die for my country, to die young, while all ideals are not yet shattered (this seemed to me the best kind of death); and secondly, to be true to myself. I had marched in all processions, and I felt that it was my duty to seal my words with deeds. These were the main reasons. Mingled with these motives was also a desire for novel and thrilling adventures, a thirst for new experiences.

If you should recall these things, you would find my present step quite consistent, and would understand everything. At the present time I realize, and am trying to get others to realize, that only law and order and a favourable issue of the war can save our country from disgrace and ruin. That these sentiments may not remain mere fine words, I am ready once more to face anything that may be in store for me and to suit the action to the words.

Mother, darling, believe me when I say that it is only this profound conviction that has irresistibly compelled me to act as I have.

I cannot compromise with my conscience, dear mother, and excuse myself by saying that I am still too weak, too ill to do my duty to my country. Both before and after I was sent back to the rear, to the hospital, I had been thinking of the danger of losing my life at the hands of my own soldiers, and more such thoughts. But by joining the Battalion of Death I know that, God willing, I shall be able to render useful service.

Darling mother, do not grieve that I have gone away. Men who are far worse in health than I are also going. The more invalid the deeper the impression, the better chance to rally those who have lost courage at this critical moment.

Believe me, darling mother, that these lines come from the bottom of my heart, and that they are no idle words. I was never fond of lies, and now I have forgotten such things entirely.

But why all this? Let me tell you frankly that I should have enjoyed immensely going away to the country. . . . But what can a man do when we live in times like these? I feel that now, at this time, all of us ought to try to forget ourselves entirely and lose ourselves, so to speak, in the common cause. Ah, were it only possible to impress everybody with this! One

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

should not, however, become a hopeless pessimist, and should engrave on his heart and mind these lines from our dear poet :

‘Trust, the time will come
For Baal to pass away,
And love will once again
On earth exert its sway.’

This, darling mother, is all I want to write to you in parting.
Until we meet again, I kiss you fondly. Be not angry with me.
Loving you deeply and sincerely, always

Your son,

KOLIA.

Disaster in Petrograd, disorder at the front, and more disorder throughout the length of Imperial Russia, as it had been until March 1917. Reports coming in to the central newspapers in July and August painted a distressing picture of the countryside:

After arriving home, I was elected to the volost committee. In our village there is no order. People live as they did before the Revolution. They make moonshine and sell it for two roubles a bottle. Drunkenness and robbery are on the increase.

The Cossacks who live in the neighbourhood steal from the landholders and peasants and insult the women. They do not even respect the church. In one village the store of the Consumers' Society was looted, and in another the home of a very popular doctor. . . .

With the landlords, it is not as it should be. They have planted sugar-beets, and to harvest them they offer labour one and one-half roubles per day, which is not enough to pay for board.

Livestock for the army has been bought in the villages at the rate of eleven roubles the *pud*. It was driven on the land of a certain landowner where many have perished from hunger. . . .

Committees are organized in the villages but have no idea where their authority begins or ends. Can the committee dismiss a worthless priest? Can a landowner sell a piece of timber land without the authorization of the committee? . . .

The cost of living and profiteering are on the increase. Speculators buy up bread and sell it later for five roubles the *pud*. There are those who have on hand one thousand or more *puds* of grain

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

and yet buy more for speculative purposes. Merchants hide manufactured goods and allow only a limited amount on the market, for which they charge high prices. There is an abundance of money in the village and, with it, dissipation and debauchery. For the first time in the history of the village we have a house of ill-fame.

The military unit which was sent here to protect, robs the people of their cattle, fowl and bread, and insults the women. . . .

*

Each year the peasants rented their land from the landowner. This year they went to him as usual and he asked the usual rent. The peasants refused to pay it and, without much bargaining, went home. There they called a meeting and decided to take up the land without paying. They put the ploughs and harrows on their carts and started for the field. When they arrived they got into an argument as to the division of the land, because it was not at all the same quality. When they had quarrelled for a time, one of the party proposed that they proceed to the landowner's warehouse, where some good alcohol was kept. They broke into the place, where they found fifty barrels. They drank and drank, but could not drink it all. They became so drunk that they did not know what they were doing and carelessly set the place on fire. Four burned to death; the ninety others escaped. A few days later they returned to the field and once more quarrelled. It ended in a fight in which thirteen were left dead, fifteen were carried off badly injured and, of these, four died.

Soon after that a quarrel started over the rich peasants. In the village there were eighteen farmers who had from twenty-five to thirty *desiatins* of land. They had a reserve of grain of various kinds. About thirty of the villagers seized this reserve. Another village meeting was called. A few of the more intelligent peasants came out strongly against this act of robbery. It ended in another fight in which three were killed and five badly wounded. One of these peasants, whose son was killed, shook his fist and shouted: 'I will make you pay for my son.'

Three days later one of the village houses caught fire. People came running and asking, 'How did it get on fire?' Someone suggested that the man who a few days ago threatened to get even was the incendiary. The mob started for his place and killed him. When that was done, it was learned that the fire was due to the

carelessness of the housewife. On that day a strong wind was blowing straight down the street, and 132 houses were burned. . . .

Lenin might still be in the minority inside the debating halls of Russian politics, but outside in the streets of Petrograd the most active and violent elements of a public rapidly becoming more impatient with the vacillations of the Government tended to support the extreme left. Throughout Russia, isolated Soviets refused to recognize the authority of the First Coalition Government. Just outside Petrograd itself, the naval garrison on the island of Kronstadt followed suit and set up an independent Soviet. Strategically this state of affairs represented a grave threat to the Government. Just as in 1905, when there had been trouble in Kronstadt as well as in the Black Sea Fleet, the navy provided a vital makeweight in the balance of the Revolution. Philips Price, the correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* in Russia, decided to visit Kronstadt in June. The island was acquiring notoriety in Petrograd, especially since the last week in May, when the Kronstadt sailors started to besiege the American Embassy with the aim of taking the ambassador as hostage until the Government granted certain political concessions.

Philips Price gives a vivid account of the eighteen months following on the fall of the Tsar. On returning from Russia, he admitted much later that he 'had to some extent imbibed the doctrine of Marx' during his stay in Petrograd. His book, *My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution*, 'contains fairly extensive passages of Communist jargon which I had picked up. . . . I had become, in fact, a "fellow-traveller" . . .'

In consequence of the extraordinary rumours that were current in Petrograd at this time about the 'terrorist' régime in Kronstadt, I decided to make a journey to see for myself what was going on there. On a fine June morning at the Vassilyi Ostrov quay I boarded a little steamer, which sailed down the Neva, past the great dockyards of this 'window into Europe', and out into the blue waters of the Gulf of Finland. Soon a long, low island hove in sight. Situated almost midway between the two coasts, it effectively controlled the passage of ships up to the mouth of the Neva. A few cruisers, naval training ships and fishing boats were

clustered under the lee of the island in a little harbour. Factory chimneys told of iron foundry works, and the mounds, serrated against the sky, spoke of the forts guarding the approaches of Petrograd. Here was the famous island fortress, ready to stand a siege, able, thanks to its factories and war stores, to maintain for many weeks an existence independent of the outside world. Kronstadt on that June day, as I approached it by the sea, seemed to breathe a spirit of independence and defiance. And I thought, as I looked on it, of the strange personalities that it had produced in former Russian revolutions, of Father John of Kronstadt and of other political priests.

The steamer arrived. I left the quay and walked up the main street of the town. I went to the offices of the Kronstadt Soviet, which was the former Naval Officers' Club. I asked to see the President and was shown into a room, where I found seated a young man who appeared to be a student. He had long hair and dreamy eyes, with the far-off look of the idealist. This was the President of the Kronstadt Workers', Soldiers' and Sailors' Soviet. 'Be seated,' he said. 'I suppose you have come down from Petrograd to see if all the stories of our terror are true. You will probably have observed that there is nothing extraordinary going on here; we are simply putting this place into order after the tyranny and chaos of the late Tsarist régime. The workmen, soldiers and sailors here find that they can do this job better by themselves than by leaving it to people who call themselves democrats, but are really the friends of the old régime. That is why we have declared the Kronstadt Soviet the supreme authority in the island. We recognize the fact that the Coalition Government exists in Petrograd, just as I recognize the fact that you are sitting in that chair; but that does not mean that we recognize its authority over us.'

After further conversation he suggested that I might like to see the fortress and the naval and military prisons, and offered to take me round himself. This student-president and I thereupon went out and walked down the main street. He began to be very friendly and confidential in the true Russian style, and although I had known him for barely half an hour, took my arm and began to tell me about himself and Kronstadt. 'I was a student of technology at the Petrograd Institute,' he said. 'During my studies I had frequent occasion to come down here and see what was

going on. You can have no idea of it. The soldiers and sailors were treated on this island like dogs. They were worked from early morning till late at night. They were not allowed any recreation for fear that they would associate for political purposes. Nowhere could you study the slavery system of capitalist Imperialism better than here. For the smallest misdemeanour a man was put in chains, and if he was found with a Socialist pamphlet in his possession, he was shot. There was terror indeed. The ruling classes of Russia had to keep this régime going in Kronstadt in order to cow the men into submission, for, herded together on this island in a half-communal state, they could so easily combine to overthrow the power of their officers. The latter only kept the system going by a corps of picked gendarmes and a system of spy-provocateurs. A very large percentage of the soldiers and sailors of Kronstadt were drawn from the artisan class and from the better educated type of peasant, who had knowledge of some craft. Most of them could read and write. This fact made Kronstadt one of the most advanced revolutionary centres in Russia.'

While talking over these things, we arrived at the big square in front of the cathedral. A large crowd of workmen, soldiers and sailors had gathered here. Presently there came from the cathedral a procession with red banners and, borne aloft by sailors, some five or six urns. 'These are the bones,' said my companion, 'of some comrades who were executed here after the 1905 Revolution by the Tsarist reaction, because of their revolutionary activities. One of them had attempted to bring food to his comrades who were beleaguered and starved out by the Tsarist gendarmes on a small island off the Finnish coast. Another had attempted to rescue his friend from prison the night before he was to have been executed. We never knew where these comrades were buried, but we found out later that their bodies were thrown into a pit. We found the pit, dug up the bones recently and are giving honour to those who died for the freedom which we now enjoy.' A grave had been dug near the monument of Admiral Makarov. Soldiers and sailors spoke a few words in memory of their comrades, and the urns descended into the earth. And yet those men had died eleven years ago. They were personally unknown to all but a very few of the garrison of Kronstadt that day. But they had died for the same cause; the same mystic power had driven them to rebel and to strike a despairing blow for freedom. The feeling of

comradeship in arms against a common tyranny had bridged the gap of years and had made these unknown in the flesh, known in the spirit. Such was the magic power that drove the Russian Revolution. In the breasts of the Kronstadt men was a force which could not be broken, even though two years later the British Fleet was to be used to fire upon their forts and try to reduce them again to the slavery from which they had freed themselves in March 1917.

We passed on to the prison on the north-east of the island. The sentries gave a friendly nod to the President and said 'Good morning, comrade,' as we passed them. Inside the iron doors we entered a low room in which, sitting and lying on iron bedsteads, were a number of half-dressed, unshaved, unkempt men. They were the erstwhile satraps of Tsarist might in Kronstadt. There was a naval officer—a man over fifty, whose imprisonment had begun to tell on him. 'Look at this,' he said, as he took my hand and placed it on his projecting hip-bone; 'what have I done to deserve this?' I passed on to a major-general, formerly in command of the fortress artillery in Kronstadt. He stood in his shirt-sleeves—no medalled tunic decorated his breast any more, although he had fought at Port Arthur and in the Polish campaign. His red-striped trousers of Prussian blue bore signs of three months' wear in confinement. Sheepishly he looked at me, as if uncertain whether it was dignified for him to tell his troubles to a stray foreigner. 'I wish they would bring some indictment against us,' he said at length, 'for to sit here for three months and not know what our fate is to be is rather hard.' 'And I sat here, not for three months, but three years,' broke in the sailor guard who was taking us round, 'and I didn't know what was going to happen to me, although my only offence was that I had been distributing a pamphlet on the life of Karl Marx.' Next I came upon a young artillery officer who seemed to take his troubles in a very sportsmanlike way. 'I never ill-treated my men,' he said, 'but they arrested me with a lot of officers whom they had a grudge against, and rightly so, for they treated their men like dogs. I used to have trouble with my brother officers, and indeed they turned me out of the Naval Club, because I protested against some of the things that went on there. And for this I sit alongside with them.' Further on I came upon a Vice-Admiral. His spirit seemed very nearly broken, for his face was

thin and pale, his voice weak and his hands shaky. 'I did my duty to my Tsar,' he murmured. 'I always served my country and was ready to die for it. I fought in the Japanese war and was wounded twice in this war. If I was strict with my men, it was because I loved the Tsar and my country, and knew that only thus could Russia be great and her people happy'—and so saying he wept.

I was taken to the south side of the island, where in another prison were kept the former military police, gendarmes, police spies and provocateurs of fallen Tsarism. In a low, dingy corridor I could see the outline of large, sinewy human forms. Here was a gendarme in that long grey cloak that once was the terror of striking and petitioning masses. In reply to a question he said: 'If only they would take us out and put us to do some work! We are strong and can serve our country, whether it is monarchy or republic.' Beside him was a military policeman. His coarse, heavy features were untouched by any signs either of anger or of repentance. He seemed to be thinking of food, drink and sleep. A happy existence indeed for a man situated as he was!

At that moment I saw in front of me the lean figure of a man in civilian clothes. His bloodshot eyes, looking out from under dishevelled hair, were like those of a hunted animal that hears the hounds approaching. 'So you have come at last,' they seemed to say. 'Am I to be hanged or shot? Or what form of death has been prepared for me?' . . .

As I passed out of the prison, a bent old woman came up to my companion and, with tears in her eyes, begged him to give her some news of her only son. He was a gendarme, and on the first day of the Revolution had, with some half-dozen others, occupied the watchtower with machine guns and had swept the main street with a deadly fire, which had laid low three of the revolutionary leaders besides many dockyard labourers. She was a widow, and had no one to earn for her now. She knew nothing of politics, she said, and wanted only peace. The President of the Soviet was touched, and thought for a moment. Human sympathy told him to unbend. Revolutionary discipline told him to be firm. 'The whole case of these men is being dealt with,' he said. 'We are even allowing the Provisional Government to send down a commissioner to examine with us the indictments. Your son will probably be free before long.'

I left the prisons and tried to forget what I had seen. For they

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

contained men who were punished for being agents of a cruel system, which was after all their only means of livelihood. There were others who had served that system because they were educated in an atmosphere which made them see nothing but good in it. But these agents of the old régime were now being punished by men who had suffered far more than they were now inflicting. In fact, my chief wonder was that the new rulers of Kronstadt, after all they had gone through, still retained their human feelings. What a history lay written in those Kronstadt stone walls! Oh for a Dostoïevsky to describe the inmates of those 'dead houses'! Oh for a Tolstoy to strike a note of human sympathy!

On the following day I visited the dockyards and foundries of Kronstadt. I found that the first results of the March Revolution had been to call into being the so-called 'fabrichnyi komitet', or factory committee, which is the Russian form of 'shop stewards'. They had extended to the dock-workers in the form of 'district unions'. These committees and unions were the elementary industrial unit upon which the Soviet idea was based, and in Kronstadt I found them already well developed. They were formed by the men of all grades, skilled and unskilled, who met for half an hour after the day's work. While I was going over the yard and foundries I found the central offices of one of these committees. In the corner of a workshop there was a table and chair and a notebook, in which the secretary set down the resolutions and minutes. That was the office. And yet in those unimposing quarters important public work was already being performed. Delegates went forth from this place to the Kronstadt Soviet, which was the *de facto*, if not the *de jure*, political authority on the island, controlling militia, prisons, public services, food supplies and so on. From here also went forth delegates, who were assuming direct control in industrial affairs. They claimed and exercised the right to inspect the accounts and books of the management, saw to it that no materials left the premises without good reason, and in general ways looked after the welfare of the industry and of its members. These rudimentary proletarian organizations, therefore, had divided their activities into two branches, one political and the other industrial. Both these branches, however, sprang from the same roots.

The factory committee and dock unions which I saw in such

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

active development at Kronstadt were really the fighting organs of the revolutionary workmen. In Petrograd they had, in the first days of the Revolution, been formed out of a few energetic spirits among the skilled artisans. The latter took very easily to the idea of the industrial council, because they had never been in any very large numbers organized into craft unions. The weakness of the craft union movement in Russia under Tsarism greatly facilitated the process of organizing the skilled and unskilled workers together in big industrial unions. The skilled men were not a privileged caste, claiming all sorts of special rights. On the contrary, they largely took the lead in creating the new factory committees for the control of industry. In Kronstadt, where there was an unusually large number of skilled workers and sailors, the factory committees had reached a high state of efficiency, as early as June 1917. The greatest employer in the island was the State. But, nevertheless, the work of the State officials was subject to rigid scrutiny for the men were fully alive to the fact that in a capitalist State the bureaucracy is only the agent of 'big business'.

But there were also private capitalist concerns in Kronstadt, and chief of these was the cable factory. This, I found, was already under the control of the factory committee. The owner, who had tried to close down the works and to sell some of the machinery to a foreign bank, was arrested, the whole business requisitioned in the name of the Kronstadt Political Soviet, and administered by the factory committee. The latter had actually sent its agents to Petrograd to buy stocks of metal and fittings, and had found the cash by deducting a percentage from the men's wages. How long this state of affairs could continue, however, was doubtful. It was clear that some directing hand was needed to co-ordinate the production in the public interest and to prevent the new workers' control from developing into syndicalist ownership and a new form of capitalism. In the meanwhile, however, the Kronstadt dock and metal workers had in their island fortress already broken the power of 'big business' and of its ally, the State bureaucracy, and had laid the foundations of a system which, with the necessary provisions for the protection of the public and consumer, would conduct industry through the agency of the workers' guilds. And now I discovered the real cause of the outcry against Kronstadt in Petrograd bourgeois circles: Kronstadt

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

had gone one stage beyond the rest of the country and was openly threatening the capitalist system.

Before leaving Kronstadt I attended a sitting of the Workers', Soldiers' and Sailors' Soviet, the political body. The sitting took place in the former Naval Officers' Club. In the great salon, where formerly balls and banquets were given, and whose walls were still hung with the pictures of the Russian Navy welcoming Tsars and foreign sovereigns, the Kronstadt Soviet deliberated. The admirals and generals and officers, picked from the flower of the aristocracy who formerly haunted its precincts, were now in the prisons that I had visited that day. Their places were taken by brawny common sailors, lusty great peasant soldiers and horny-handed mechanics, just come in from their day's work. A keen and energetic bunch they were, these Kronstadt sons of toil, who hailed from every part of Russia. The pick of the land, the flower of Russia's revolutionary greatness. No feasts of intellect in university or college had these men performed. They had a native instinct, which enabled them to see direct and call a spade a spade, to read the signs of the times and to act when action was needed. The question on the order of the day was, whether the Coalition Government's Commissioner should be accepted on the island. A debate followed. These men spoke shortly, simply and to the point. Some thought that acceptance of the Commissioner would mean admission of the Coalition Government's authority in Kronstadt. Others thought a compromise could be arranged because the rest of the country was not as yet ready to accept the position taken up by Kronstadt on the matter of Soviet authority. The tone of the debate was throughout moderate, and a compromise was ultimately reached, by which the Commissioner was to be received on the island as the 'guest' of the Soviet.

I found on examination that the Bolsheviks were a minority in the Soviet. The greater number of delegates belonged to no party at all. But in actual fact they were doing everything that the Bolsheviks were officially preaching. The Bolshevik leader in Kronstadt said that his party were not going to force events. Time, he said, was working for them. The war and profiteering were reducing Russia to misery and famine and pushing the masses steadily to the Kronstadt position. That process was not yet accomplished, but it would be before many months. That would be the time to act. Meanwhile, he was willing to wait and

watch the interesting little experiments which the working-class masses were making on their own initiative, without any prompting from the outside. Kronstadt was, he said, but an early development, due to peculiar local conditions of what would happen throughout the rest of Russia.

On July 16th a premature revolt favouring the Bolsheviks, headed by the Kronstadt sailors, broke out in Petrograd.

After arriving at the Tauride Palace, the seat of the Government, the sailors worked themselves up to such a pitch of frenzy that they arrested the Socialist Revolutionary Chernov when he came out to address them, and then even threatened Trotsky, a Bolshevik; both men were members of the Petrograd Soviet which the Kronstadters were supposed to be putting into power instead of the First Coalition Government. But, as Philips Price remarked, 'The greater number of delegates [to the Kronstadt Soviet] belonged to no party at all.' Sukhanov describes the scene outside the Tauride Palace:

It was around five o'clock. Someone hurried into the [Soviet] Executive Committee rooms and reported that the Kronstadters had come to the Palace. Under the leadership of Roshal and Ras-kolnikov, they filled all the square and a large part of the Shpalernyi. They were in an ugly, fighting mood. They were asking for the Socialist Ministers, and a whole mass of them was pouring into the Palace.

*

I went to the meeting-hall. From the windows of the crowded corridor looking on to the square I saw an endless multitude packing the entire space as far as the eye could reach. Armed men were climbing through the open windows. A mass of placards and banners with the Bolshevik slogans rose above the crowd. As before, in the left corner of the square the black, ugly masses of armoured cars loomed up.

I forced my way into the antechamber, which was completely packed; lines and groups of people, in the midst of the noise and clanking of arms, for some reason or other were excitedly pushing back and forth. Suddenly someone tugged at my sleeve. Lesha Emelianova, an old SR [Socialist Revolutionary] friend, recently back from prison and now on the staff of *Izvestiia*, stood before me. She was pale and trembling violently.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

'Go quickly—Chernov's been arrested—the Kronstadters—here in the courtyard! Quickly, quickly.... They may kill him!'

I rushed towards the doors. Just then I saw Raskolnikov pushing his way towards the Catherine Hall. I seized him by the arm and pulled him back with me, explaining on the way what the trouble was: if Raskolnikov couldn't pacify the Kronstadters, who could? But it wasn't easy to get out: there was a crush in the porch. Raskolnikov followed me obediently, but answered me ambiguously. I was perplexed and began to lose my temper. We had already pushed through the steps when Trotsky, shouldering aside the crowd, overtook us. He was also hurrying to Chernov's rescue.

It seemed that this was what had happened. When the Central Executive Committee was told that the Kronstadters were demanding the Socialist Ministers, the Praesidium sent Chernov out to them. No sooner had he appeared at the top of the steps of the entry-way that the Kronstadters became very aggressive; shouts arose from the armed crowd of many thousands: 'Search him! See whether he's armed!'

'In that case I won't speak,' Chernov declared, and started back into the Palace.

Then the crowd got relatively calm. Chernov made a short speech about the Government crisis, sharply condemning the Cadets who had left the Government. The speech was interrupted by shouts of a Bolshevik character. And towards the end some enterprising person in the crowd demanded that the Socialist Ministers at once declare the land national property, etc.

There arose a frantic din. The crowd, brandishing its weapons, began to surge forward. A group of people tried to get Chernov inside the Palace, but strong hands seized him and put him in an open car standing close to the steps at the right of the porch. Chernov was declared under arrest as a hostage.

A group of workers immediately rushed off to report all this to the Central Executive Committee; bursting into the White Hall, they produced a panic by shouting out: 'Comrade Chernov has been arrested by the mob! They're tearing him to pieces right now! To the rescue! Everyone out into the street!'

Chkheidze, restoring order with difficulty, proposed that Kamenev, Martov, Lunacharsky and Trotsky should hasten to

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

rescue Chernov. I don't know where the others were, but Trotsky got there in time.

Raskolnikov and I had stopped on the top step near the right side of the porch—when Trotsky, two steps below us, climbed up on the bonnet of a car. The mob was in turmoil as far as the eye could reach. Around the motor car a number of sailors with rather savage faces were particularly violent. Chernov, who had plainly lost all presence of mind, was in the back seat.

All Kronstadt knew Trotsky and, one would have thought, trusted him. But he began to speak and the crowd did not subside. If a shot had been fired nearby at that moment by way of provocation, a tremendous slaughter might have occurred, and all of us, including perhaps Trotsky, might have been torn to shreds. Trotsky, excited and not finding words in this savage atmosphere, could barely make the nearest rows listen to him. But what was he saying?

'You hurried over here, Red Kronstadters, as soon as you heard the Revolution was in danger! Red Kronstadt has once again shown itself to be the champion of the proletarian cause. Long live Red Kronstadt, the glory and pride of the Revolution! . . .'

Nevertheless he was listened to with hostility. When he tried to pass on to Chernov himself, the ranks around the car again began raging.

'You've come to declare your will and show the Soviet that the working class no longer wants to see the bourgeoisie in power. But why hurt your own cause by petty acts of violence against casual individuals? Individuals are not worthy of your attention. . . . Every one of you has demonstrated his devotion to the Revolution. Every one of you is ready to lay down his life for it. I know that. Give me your hand, Comrade! Your hand, brother!'

Trotsky stretched his hand down to a sailor who was protesting with especial violence. But the latter firmly refused to respond, and moved his hand—the one which was not holding a rifle—out of reach. If these were people alien to the Revolution or outright provocateurs, to them Trotsky was just as bad as Chernov, or much worse: they might be waiting only for an opportunity to settle accounts with both advocate and defendant. But I think they were Kronstadt naval ratings who had, in their own judgment, accepted Bolshevik ideas. It seemed to me that the sailor,

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

who must have heard Trotsky in Kronstadt more than once, now had a real feeling that he was a traitor: he remembered his previous speeches and was confused. Let Chernov go? Then why had he been summoned?

Not knowing what to do, the Kronstadters released Chernov. Trotsky took him by the arm and hurried him off into the Palace. But I, remaining on the scene of events, made a row with Raskolnikov.

‘Take away your army at once!’ I demanded. ‘You must see that the most senseless fights may occur. What can be the *political* objective of their staying here, and of this whole movement? They have made their *will* clear enough, and there’s nothing to be done here by *violence*. You know the question of the Government is being debated, and everything going on in the streets is simply killing the possibility of a favourable decision.’

Raskolnikov looked at me angrily and mumbled some monosyllables. He obviously didn’t know what more he could do at the Tauride Palace with his Kronstadters, but he clearly didn’t want to take them away.

The leaders of the Petrograd Soviet refused to desert the First Coalition Government and take the power into their own hands, as the Kronstadters wanted. When the Minister of Justice in the First Coalition spread round documents claiming to show that Lenin was a German spy, the Bolsheviks, who had supported the uprising and under whose banner the sailors had chosen to march, were placed in an extremely precarious position. Bernard Pares relates how the tide turned in favour of the First Coalition Government once more:

When I arrived at Petrograd, rifles were firing in the streets. Somewhere near the Nicholas station a nest of Bolsheviks was being cleared out.

The next day (July 17th) I was in the Anglo-Russian Hospital on the Nevskii, when a procession numbering something like ten thousand came past, evidently out to upset the Government. There were two whole regiments, with a fag-end of workmen, women and others. This was the second Bolshevik attempt to seize Petrograd. Some of the men aimed their rifles at the windows and shouted threats at any who looked out. The plan was simple. If everyone was afraid and stayed indoors, the procession could

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

enter any house and deal with the people in it as it liked. One had seen this kind of trouble ripening. A crowd had broken into one of the Government buildings with impunity. The moment the mob knew that it could do this without reproach from the Government, all order and authority were at an end. Certainly there was the greatest resentment everywhere; but what was wanted was resistance. Lady Muriel Paget, who was with some of us in the hospital, showed great spirit, and wanted to watch it all from the window, but bullets began to fly.

The moment the firing began, an extraordinary thing happened; the whole procession seemed to have taken cover, though I am pretty certain that the shots came almost entirely from them. One felt that this was not an enemy that one need be greatly afraid of, and the shamed faces of some of the soldiers gave me the same impression. In the momentary void, I noticed a little cabman, heavily padded and in the quaint small top hat of his profession, driving along through the open, bowed down just as if under a storm of rain. Knox, who had met the crowd crossing one of the bridges over the Neva, had seen them all take cover in just the same way when the midday gun went off at the fortress.

Soon a number of heavy lorries rumbled down the street, loaded with soldiers, who also pointed their rifles at the windows. Two or three wounded soldiers from the front, however, stopped some of these motors and even disarmed the men, though unarmed themselves. The Cossacks came in on the side of order, and charged. The Bolshies hailed them with cries of 'Bloodsuckers!'

The Ministers had taken refuge in various places, some of them with the Soviet and others at the General Staff. Among these last was the Minister of Justice, a Socialist named Pereverzev. A little group of my friends of the League of Personal Example, headed by Aleksinsky, went there to offer their help. One or two of the Ministers were in a panic, but Pereverzev handed over to Aleksinsky a number of proofs of complicity of the Bolsheviks with the Germans. These were telegrams which had been stopped at the Petrograd Head Office, apparently on the initiative of the English Colonel Bennett. They came from well-known German agents in Stockholm and Copenhagen . . . and were addressed to the Bolshevik leaders—one of them to Lenin's wife. Reading the addresses, I was rather alarmed to find

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

that they all seemed to be living in the neighbourhood of my quarters on the Basseinaia. These telegrams were chiefly concerned with two subjects—money supplied and the detail of propaganda. They even contained the very mottoes which I saw with my own eyes on the flags displayed, as the Bolshevik procession moved down the Nevskii.

Aleksinsky, always like a little bulldog, accepted this material with relish and, going to the window of the General Staff, he at once read it out to soldiers of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment of the Guard, who had collected outside. Some of these went and fetched the rest of their comrades; they shouted back that now they understood that the Bolshevik attempt was a German manoeuvre, and that they would back the Provisional Government for all they were worth. Meanwhile, those Ministers who were at the Soviet had managed to persuade it to support them, and in the evening the Soviet sent out its own large lorries, which cleared the streets of Bolsheviks.

The attempt had failed; but most of the processionists, many of whom had come from Kronstadt, thought they might as well have a holiday and walk the streets with their girls who, by the way, were very much in evidence throughout this period. Sailors with scantily-dressed and high-heeled ladies were seen everywhere.

On the following day, July 18th, forces working for the Government broke into the Bolshevik headquarters and the offices of the main Bolshevik paper, *Izvestiia*, which Sukhanov had gone to such pains to protect in the March Days. They succeeded in arresting Trotsky, but Lenin slipped through the net by hiding in the home of an old Bolshevik worker, Aliliuev, the future father-in-law of Stalin. Lenin later crossed into Finland. Aliliuev's daughter hurried back from a village outside Petrograd when she heard of the danger in which the Bolsheviks stood after the July Days:

I ran to the station. Vague and incorrect rumours about what was happening in the capital were accumulating there at the same time as the passengers.

'They're chasing away the Bolsheviks. Kerensky won't let them take over,' I caught from snatches of other people's conversations.

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

‘They’ve fired on the Bolshevik demonstrations. . . .’

I listened to these words, spoken either with malice or as an angry, repressed threat, and my heart sank: they are arresting the Bolsheviks, they’re dispersing the demonstration. How are our people getting on there? How’s father, and mother? They were probably at the demonstration. I could bear it no longer in Levashev [*the village outside Petrograd where Alilueva was staying*]. Mother was going to come out and fetch me, but instead sent me word by a conductor that she was staying on in the city and was not coming. This finally frightened me. I packed my things, gave a parting look at the peaceful little houses of Levashev and climbed on to the crowded local train.

It was a slow train. Passengers came in and then left—summer residents in the country, some kind of officials, milkmaids with pails. And amongst them, soldiers and sailors, armed and unarmed.

Squashed up on the bench near the door, I listened eagerly to the conversation. The events in Petrograd overshadowed all other interests. People dressed and thought differently and were strangers to each other, but all of them talked and quarrelled about one thing: what was happening in the capital?

‘The Bolsheviks, Lenin! . . .’ could be heard in several corners of the carriage.

‘The Bolsheviks have been driven out . . . Lenin has fled . . . shot. . . .’

I listened, became excited and exasperated, I do not want nor cannot believe it. . . .

But the passengers, interrupting one another, hasten to surprise each other with gripping ‘authentic’ details of what has happened.

‘He’s fled, I know for certain. . . . He’s hiding in Kronstadt. He’s been seen there.’

‘No, he’s been taken out on a minesweeper. . . . A chap I know told me himself.’

I felt like covering my ears so as not to hear this foolish chatter. But the train has already arrived at the platform in Petrograd. I jump off and run across the square of the Finland Station. It is a hot, summery July day. The city seems unexpectedly quiet, familiar and ordinary. Passers-by hurry past, the trams come and go. Are unavoidable events looming up in an

alarming way and intruding on this unhurried bustle in the streets?

Not without difficulty I get on to a tram packed with people. They're speaking of the same thing in the tram. My anxiety increases. But here I am at home at 10 Rozdestvenskoi Street. I stop, regain my breath and look through the glass pane of the heavy door. Unperturbed, as if nothing had happened, the familiar concierge sits at the entrance. I try to speak calmly:

'Do you know if my folks are at home? Have you seen them?'

'They're all well. Everything's all right. I think your father's at home.'

But all the same, my hand shakes when I press the bell. I am surprised when the door doesn't open immediately. I ring again, and the door slowly opens a little bit.

'Papa! It's me. . . . Why are you here? . . .'

My father doesn't answer at once. Is he really so displeased that I have come back? He looks about carefully, listens intently and tests the door to see that it is closed properly. Only then does he speak to me:

'Well, let's go into the dining-room, we have visitors. And mother's there.'

Oh, so that's it! We have visitors! Some comrades have probably come to see father. And I burst in so unexpectedly. Already feeling calmer, I go into the dining-room.

People are sitting round the table. This is the first time I have seen them in our house. But I recognize at once the first person my father takes me to. He is sitting on the sofa with his jacket off, revealing a waistcoat and a light-coloured shirt with a tie (it is very stuffy inside on this unbearably hot day). Screwing up his eyes attentively, he looks at me.

'May I introduce you, Vladimir Il'ich. My eldest daughter, Niura.'

Trying to assume a calm, completely calm mien, I shake Lenin's hand.

And at once all the foolish talk I have heard in the train, on the tram and on the street came back into my head. He fled to Kronstadt, he's hiding on a minesweeper! And here he is, in our rooms, on Rozdestvenskoi Street, in the very centre of Petrograd. I decide to pass on to Lenin all this foolish talk which I have just heard.

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

'I didn't expect to meet you at our house. You know in the train they said you had fled to Kronstadt and also that you were on a minesweeper. . . .'

'Ha-ha-ha! . . . ' Lenin laughs with infectious gaiety, leaning backwards with his whole body. 'Is that what they say . . . on a minesweeper? . . . Now that's superb. Yet another version of my flight. That's very good, that they've seen me in Kronstadt. What do you think, comrades?'

Vladimir Il'ich makes me repeat all that I have heard on the way. He questions me on what I have noticed on the streets, what Petrograd is like today. After being pent up all day I calm down completely and in talking with Lenin become more lively, laugh, forget all my recent anxiety. . . .

Vladimir Il'ich is so simple, so winningly attentive, asks questions with such sincere curiosity and listens to me as if I were quite his equal.

'How remarkable he is, how remarkable . . . !' I say to mother when we go into the kitchen.

'Oh, he's such a great man! Such a . . . !' Like me, mother cannot find adequate words. 'He's been with us for two days now. I met him at the Poletaevs. We were told that it was unsafe for Lenin to stay there. Kerensky wants to arrest him! He advised him to give himself up of his own accord. But Lenin refused. Joseph was also categorically against the idea. They decided that Lenin should go into hiding for the time being. Now they're looking for him all over the city. What luck that we're in a new flat and no one knows our address.'

In view of the mounting unrest in the capital, it was decided that the Imperial Family should be moved from Tsarskoe Selo to the provincial town of Tobolsk in Siberia, where it was hoped they would be safe from the Petrograd mob. They travelled out of European Russia on a train under the Japanese flag. Princess Paley describes their melancholy departure:

The hour of departure was fixed for 1 a.m. on the night of August 13th; Kerensky bustled in and out, ordered a train, then cancelled it, behaving capriciously in his usual incoherent manner. When the Emperor and his family had had a Te Deum sung by the Court priest and had kissed the ikon of the Holy Virgin of Znamenie

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

for the last time . . . they sat down, already dressed for the journey, and waited patiently to go. The Sovereign, who was accustomed to give orders, submitted to the force of events. They remained there until six o'clock in the morning, worn out with fatigue and emotion. They were leaving the house in which they had lived since their marriage, where their children had been born and where they had been happy; they were parting from their faithful servants, who wept abundantly in saying good-bye. They were leaving all the happiness of the past and going to an unknown province which seemed so far off, so cold and sad. . . . Finally, at 6 a.m., Kerensky announced in his self-important manner that 'everything was ready'. The Sovereigns got into some nondescript cars—the handsome Imperial machines were being used by members of the Provincial Government—and made the short run from the Alexander Palace to the Imperial pavilion, between a hedge of revolutionary soldiers. In his great kindness the Emperor, who had not much money left, had fifty kopeks distributed to each of them for being disturbed in the middle of the night. And there were several hundred men there. . . .

When they got to the station, the Sovereigns found that the train was not in the station but much further down the line, nearly out of sight. . . . Kerensky explained that this had been done as a precautionary measure. . . . The poor Empress, who had heart trouble, had to walk for at least ten minutes along the embankment, her feet sinking into the sand! Arriving at the carriage, which was not the Imperial one, the Empress discovered that the distance between the ground and the foot-board was so great that she could not reach the first step! They hadn't even thought of bringing some folding steps to make it easier for her to climb up! After repeated attempts, the poor woman managed to haul herself up and fell exhausted and with all her weight on the carriage platform. . . .

Such was the last, distressing scene of our dear martyrs which Count and Countess Benckendorff witnessed. The family left for an exile which was a real Calvary, and for the most terrible death. . . .

The Kronstadt uprising had one positive effect in that it caused yet another crisis in the Government. The Second Coalition was formed on July 21st, with Kerensky as Prime Minister.

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

In an effort to unite the many political factions and pull the disintegrating State together, Kerensky called the Moscow State Conference on August 25th.

Sukhanov made his way to Moscow on the eve of the Conference as a representative of the Socialist Revolutionaries:

From the beginning of August the whole bourgeoisie and the 'whole democracy' were preparing for the sensational 'State Conference'. But no one could tell why this strange and unwieldy affair was undertaken just then. The Press was strenuously trying to make the man in the street take an interest in this enterprise—not without success. The man in the street, like everyone else, saw that something was decidedly out of tune in our revolution. No matter what they tried in the Marian and Winter Palaces—still nothing happened. Well, maybe the Moscow Conference would 'produce' something. . . .

On the evening of the 24th I left the Yaroslavl countryside for Moscow. I got into a train at one of the stations *before* Yaroslavl, but the train was already overflowing, and in all classes you had to stand up all night. In Yaroslavl, by using my title of Central Executive Committee member, I penetrated into an almost empty military carriage. I was delighted at my success, but something rather disagreeable happened as a result. I was naïve enough to remove my boots, which were gone when I happened to wake up an hour or two later. The extraordinary stupidity of my situation prevented me from going to sleep again.

In Moscow, astounding the crowd with my stockinged feet, I made my way to the stationmaster and spent about two hours telephoning to people at random, to see whether some friend could bring a pair of boots to the station for me. This was all quite typical of travelling at this time.

I finally found someone with a spare pair of boots. But bringing them proved to be more difficult than could have been expected. The trams in Moscow had stopped, and there were almost no drozhky-drivers in the streets either. There was a strike, not a general one, but very impressive and sufficient to manifest the will of the masses. A number of factories and works were on strike, as was every municipal undertaking except those satisfying the daily needs of the population. Restaurants, waiters, and even half the drozhky-drivers were on strike. This whole working-

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

class army was following the Bolsheviks *against its own Soviet!* Towards evening the demonstration would become still more perceptible: Moscow was to be submerged in darkness, since the gasworks was also on strike.

In somebody else's enormous boots I set out on foot to look for the Soviet delegation. *En route* I dropped into the journalists' office (somewhere near the post office), to see the *Novaia Zhizn'* correspondent assigned to the Conference. The journalists' office was a tower of Babel: whole crowds of them were struggling, each one against all the others, for a place at the Conference. The hubbub, excitement and play of passions attained absolutely extraordinary limits. In this street it was a real holiday and a great day. And this one picture of frenzied reporters was enough to define the historical importance of the Moscow State Conference. A good two-thirds of its weight, after all, depended on the journalists' interest in it.

The magnificent hall of the Bolshoi Theatre was glittering with all its lights. From top to bottom it was filled with a triumphal and even brilliant crowd. Oh, here in truth was all the flower of Russian society! Only a few accidental unfortunates were missing from among the big and little political 'names'. Keeping guard around the theatre was a dense column of military cadets—Kerensky's only reliable force. A niggling control system stopped one at every step inside the theatre too. Nevertheless, going into the stalls, I could scarcely make my way to my seat through the dense throng of supers crowding round the doors. . . .

Sukhanov might well have seen Philips Price, the correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, somewhere in the journalists' office, for he attended the Moscow State Conference and made a vivid report on it. He paid particular attention to the rising personality of General Kornilov, who had been appointed commander-in-chief of the army on July 31st. Kornilov had succeeded in patching up the torn Russian front after the failure of the Galician offensive; he was also making superhuman efforts to restore discipline in the army after the havoc created by Bolshevik propaganda:

The hour for the opening of the great Conference, which was to make the last attempt to save Russia, came. The delegates were

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

summoned by the Coalition from various public bodies in proportions which were fixed quite arbitrarily. The Soviets were given 30 per cent of the seats, the co-operative societies 10 per cent, the professional alliances (trade unions) 5 per cent, sundry associations of free professions 10 per cent, the reactionary four Dumas 15 per cent, the middle-class parties 15 per cent, and the Alliance of Cities and *Zemstvos* the remainder. There was to be no voting, but each group was to put forward a speaker, who was to give its idea on a common national programme. At the end of the speeches it was to be seen if a working basis between all classes could be arrived at. Inside the great theatre the spectacle was brilliant. The whole of the right side of the stalls was filled with the representatives of the four Dumas and the middle-class parties—all respectable people with frock coats and collars. On the left came the Soviet delegates of the unshaven chin and the working day shirt, with a fair sprinkling of common soldiers. In the middle, as if crushed between two millstones, came the co-operators and the free professional associations. In the boxes and the balcony sat the groups of the small nationalities and various officers' associations. In the former Imperial box sat the diplomatic representatives of the foreign powers and the agents of the Allied Military Missions. On the platform were the Ministers of the Provisional Government, and behind them the press delegates and visitors.

About two o'clock Kerensky rose on the platform. 'The State Conference opens,' he began in a rasping voice. 'The Coalition Government expects that it will be the centre from which our country will receive new inspiration in accomplishing its heavy task. All who truly love their country expect that the State Conference will find a way to unite all the healthy elements in Russia.' Turning to the groups of the Left, he uttered a warning to those who were sowing doctrines of anarchy and undermining the idea of the State. Turning to the groups of the Right, he declared that the Coalition Government would tolerate no attempt to usurp its authority—a clear hint to the officers of St. George and the groups round Kornilov. After Kerensky came a whole series of official utterances by Ministers of the Coalition Government, who spoke of the need for 'sacrifice of citizens for the country', of 'patriotic duty', of the 'proper recognition of Russia's interests' and other phrases. The delegates began to

yawn. Why not tell the truth? I seemed to hear some persons on the left of the hall saying to themselves, why not say that the half-starving workers of Russia are physically incapable of carrying on a great war in the interest of secret treaties, made by Tsardom? Why not add that the landless peasantry have not suffered for three years in order to continue landless? But then I looked over at the Imperial box, where the representatives of the Allies were seated and wondered if they understood what the Left side of the Conference was thinking. On the following day the really important speeches began. First upon the tribune mounted General Alekseev, a short, thick little man, well over middle age. He was dressed in the uniform of the General Staff, of which he had been Chief at the time of the late Emperor's abdication. The subject of his speech was the state of the Russian Army, for the supplies and equipment of which he was at the moment responsible. He pointed out that the Russian Army had been improperly equipped from the very commencement of the war. He described how the old Tsarist bureaucracy to a large extent bore the responsibility for this, because it had hindered the work of the voluntary middle-class organizations, like the Union of Cities and *Zemstvos*, which supplied what the bureaucracy could not. But that was not the only cause of the weakness of the Russian Army, he went on to say. Russia was lacking in industrial power to develop her great resources, and had not the technical equipment to enable her to carry on a long war. The Brusilov offensive, he said, in June 1916 was unable to attain its strategical objectives, because of this lack of technical equipment to guarantee its rear. Then followed a sentence which struck me as being of extraordinary importance: 'The Russian Army,' he said, 'has not been capable of assuming the offensive since the summer of 1916.' One wondered on hearing this whether he was reproaching the Allies for not having made good on the eastern front, which was lacking in equipment, or whether he was hinting that Russia was not capable of carrying on war against a first-class European Power, and must therefore shortly make peace. In any case, General Alekseev's speech at the Moscow Conference was the best evidence that I have ever heard that the Bolsheviks were not responsible for the conditions in the Russian Army during 1917, because those conditions had been in existence long before the Bolsheviks were ever heard of.

There was a profound hush in the theatre while Kerensky's voice was heard saying: 'I call upon the Commander-in-Chief in the field, General Kornilov.' Upon the tribune rose a wiry little man with strong Tartar features. He wore a general's full dress uniform with a sword and red-striped trousers. His speech was begun in a blunt soldierly manner by a declaration that he had nothing to do with politics. He had come there, he said, to tell the truth about the condition of the Russian Army. Discipline had simply ceased to exist. The army was becoming nothing more than a rabble. Soldiers stole the property not only of the State, but also of private citizens, and scoured the country plundering and terrorizing. The Russian Army was becoming a greater danger to the peaceful population of the western provinces than any invading Germany Army could be. Thereupon there were cries from the Soviet benches of 'You officers are responsible,' followed by an uproar. Kerensky rose and, amid dead silence, asked the Conference to receive with sorrow rather than with anger the Commander-in-Chief's description of a great national tragedy. Abandoning the combative strain, General Kornilov began more objectively to review the situation and made a series of astonishing revelations. The stocks of food and forage, he said, were so low and the transport in the rear so inferior that not only had an offensive been impossible for a long time past, but it was doubtful whether the army could be demobilized in an orderly manner. Everyone held his breath at this statement. Here, from the mouth of an Entente-phil Commander-in-Chief, one heard that in actual fact Russia could no longer continue the war! He then referred to the Soviets as institutions the value of which 'should be recognized' but whose 'spheres of activity should be strictly defined'. The impression left on my mind was that Kornilov was honestly trying to find a way out of the impasse, but that he was being pushed by unseen powers behind him, and that he was vain enough to allow himself to be flattered by them.

As Philips Price surmised, Kornilov was indeed 'trying to find a way out of the impasse', though by rather unexpected means. The day before the opening of the Moscow State Conference he returned from Petrograd to military headquarters at Mogilev, to the north-east of Kiev, before proceeding to the Conference.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

General Lukomsky, Kornilov's Executive Assistant, records his chief's anger:

He [Kornilov] told me with indignation that his journey to Petrograd had been fruitless. Kerensky was leading him by the nose, and evidently did not wish to carry out his requests. These had been very superficially examined at the sittings of the Provisional Government; Savinkov [*the new Minister for War*] had been entrusted to work out a definite project for restoring discipline in the army and to present it, with General Kornilov's consent, to the Provisional Government for ratification. 'They only want to gain time, as you see,' said General Kornilov. 'Mr. Kerensky evidently does not wish me to be present at the State Conference in Moscow, but I shall certainly go there and will insist on my requests being accepted and fulfilled at last,' he added.

Kornilov then revealed to Lukomsky the direction in which his thoughts were leading him:

After this, General Kornilov went back to the conversation I had had with him before his journey to Petrograd.

'As you well know,' said he, 'all the reports of our Intelligence Department tend to prove that a new manifestation of the Bolsheviks will take place in Petrograd at the beginning of next month, about September 10th-11th. It is indispensable for Germany to sign a separate peace with Russia, and throw the armies that are on our front against the French and the English.

'The German Bolshevik agents, local ones as well as those who have been sent to us in leaded railway carriages by the Germans, will do all in their power to produce a *coup d'état* and take over the supreme authority in the land.

'I feel sure . . . that the molluscs who form the Provisional Government will be swept away; if they remain in power by some miracle, the leaders of the Bolsheviks and the Council of Workmen and Soldiers' Deputies [*the Petrograd Soviet*] will be left unpunished owing to Mr. Chernov and Co.

'It is time to put an end to all this. It is time to hang the German agents and spies, with Lenin at their head, to dispel the Council of Workmen and Soldiers' Deputies and scatter them far

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

and wide, so that they should never be able to come together again!

‘You were right. My chief object in moving the Cavalry Corps is to have it at hand in the vicinity of Petrograd, at the end of August and, if this manifestation of the Bolsheviks takes place, to deal with the traitors of Russia as they deserve to be dealt with.

‘I intend to place General Krymov at the head of this operation. I know that in case of necessity he will not hesitate to hang all the members of the Council of Workmen and Soldiers’ Deputies.

‘As to the Provisional Government, I have no intention of going against them; I hope to come to an agreement with them at the last moment. But now is not the moment to speak of it to anyone, for Mr Kerensky, and especially Mr Chernov, will not consent to my plan, and all will be spoilt.

‘If I do not come to an agreement with Kerensky and Savinkov, I may have to deal the blow to the Bolsheviks without their consent. But afterwards they will be the first to thank me for this, and it will be possible to form a strong Government in Russia, independent of all kind of traitors.

‘I have no personal ambition. I only wish to save Russia and will gladly submit to a strong Provisional Government, purified of all undesirable elements.

‘Will you go with me to the end, and do you believe me when I say that I want nothing for myself?’

Knowing General Kornilov to be absolutely honest and devoted to his country, I replied that I believed what he said, that I shared his views, and would go with him to the end.

Such was the beginning, the base and the substance of the ‘conspiracy’ of which the Provisional Government accused us later on.

Early in September, Kornilov went ahead with his project by sending troops to Petrograd in order to force a change of Government. However, he did this in the belief that Kerensky concurred with his idea. This was due to the bungling of Lvov, formerly the Procurator of the Holy Synod, who attempted to mediate between Kerensky and Kornilov, but left both men under the impression that he was the representative of the other. After a meeting with Kornilov, Lvov arranged that Kornilov should himself take over the Government, which should still include Kerensky. When

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Kerensky heard of the agreement, he took it to be an ultimatum from Kornilov and duly proceeded to arrest Lvov and dismiss Kornilov. The troops dispatched to Petrograd soon dispersed, and Kornilov was arrested at Mogilev on September 14th. Lukomsky describes the tragic misunderstanding as he saw it from military headquarters at Mogilev:

On the morning of September 7th, when I came to make my daily report to General Kornilov, he told me the following:

In the evening of September 6th, Mr. Lvov (formerly Procurator of the Holy Synod) had arrived at Mogilev and demanded to see the Supreme Commander-in-Chief at once. The latter, being occupied, could not receive him, and he presented himself to General Kornilov on the following morning.

Mr. Lvov informed Kornilov that he had come as delegate of the Prime Minister, Kerensky, in order to learn the point of view of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the best and most expedient way of creating a strong authority.

The Prime Minister, it appeared, considered the three following courses as possible:

1. Kerensky himself as Dictator, at the head of a new Government.
2. A Government of three or four members (one of which must be the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, General Kornilov) invested with unlimited powers.
3. General Kornilov as Dictator and Supreme Commander-in-Chief, at the head of a new Government.

Mr. Lvov inquired whether General Kornilov considered it desirable—in the latter case—for Kerensky and Savinkov to form part of the new Government.

General Kornilov voted for the latter of these three variants, saying that Kerensky and Savinkov must be members of the new Government, and charged Mr. Lvov to inform them that he invited them both urgently to the Stavka [*Military Headquarters at Mogilev*], as he feared for their personal safety in case of a rising in the capital; and it would, moreover, be necessary to discuss a whole series of questions which would, naturally, arise in connection with the expected events.

I inquired whether Mr. Lvov had brought any written proof of his mission.

'No,' replied Kornilov, 'he had no letter with him. The questions he put were written down in his notebook, and he entered my answers in the same. Mr. Lvov is an irreproachably honest man and a gentleman, and I had no reason to distrust him.'

'I know him for a perfect gentleman,' said I, 'but I also know that he has the reputation of a blunderer, and is quite capable of making a mess of things. The very fact of Kerensky's charging a third person with this mission seems suspicious to me. I am afraid he is hatching some plot against you. All this is very, very strange. Why did not Savinkov say anything about it? Why is Lvov entrusted with this mission at the very moment of Savinkov's arrival at the Stavka? God grant I may be mistaken, but I do not like the look of it all, and I profoundly distrust Kerensky.'

Kornilov said that I was too suspicious, that Lvov had left Petrograd after Savinkov, which explains why the latter knew nothing about the subject of this mission. He believed that Kerensky was sincere in this case, as the question of Dictatorship had been discussed by him before. . . .

On September 8th, Kerensky called General Kornilov to the direct cable and begged him to confirm whether 'he had actually charged Mr. Lvov to inform him, Kerensky, of his plans and purposes'.

General Kornilov replied: 'Yes, I have charged Mr. Lvov to inform you of my plans and purposes.'

Kerensky then inquired whether General Kornilov still considered it urgent for him and Savinkov to come to the Stavka.

Kornilov replied affirmatively, after which Kerensky said: 'It is too late to start today, Saturday, but we shall leave for the Stavka on Sunday.'

General Kornilov said that he would expect them on Monday, September 10th.

I must note here what General Kornilov himself owned later on—that the latter acted most thoughtlessly in this case for, in speaking by direct cable with Kerensky, he omitted to ask him *what* it was that Lvov had said to him.

Now this was most advantageous for Kerensky, and helped him to play his treacherous game. He denied that it was he who had despatched Lvov on a mission to Kornilov; he declared, at the sittings of the Provisional Government, that Kornilov had insolently claimed to be invested with the rights and powers of a

dictator, and ended by requesting the Provisional Government to dismiss him from the post of Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

Meanwhile, Kornilov was sure that everything was going on well and that he was acting in full accordance with the Provisional Government. When I entered his study, late on the evening of September 8th, to report on something, I found him poring over the project of a new list of Ministers.

'I am elaborating the project of a new Cabinet,' said he. 'I want to have it ready for the arrival of Kerensky and Savinkov, and come to a full agreement with them. I will be glad, however, if I am freed from the necessity of being Dictator. It will be best, after all, to form a strong Government of three to four members, in which I must, of course, take part, as Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the army.'

On that same evening Kornilov sent a telegram to Moscow, to the President of the State Duma, Rodzianko, begging him and other public leaders to come to the Stavka on the morning of September 10th. When the subsequent events took place, however, neither Rodzianko nor any other of the public leaders who had so warmly supported Kornilov at the State Conference in Moscow put in an appearance at the Stavka.

At seven in the morning on September 9th, General Romanovsky, Quartermaster-General at the Stavka, brought me a telegram addressed both to General Kornilov and me.

This telegram informed us that General Kornilov was dismissed from his post and ordered to start at once for Petrograd. I was invited to take over temporarily the duties of Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

The telegram was simply signed 'Kerensky' and did not bear any number.

I took it to General Kornilov.

This was a terrible blow to him. All hope of saving the army and saving Russia was now lost. It was clear that Kerensky was bent on setting Kornilov aside and on going further towards conciliating the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies; it was clear that the Bolsheviks would get the uppermost hand, and that all that remained still of the army and the mechanism of the State would irretrievably crumble away.

After reading the telegram, General Kornilov asked what I intended to do.

I replied that I considered it impossible to take over the duties of Supreme Commander-in-Chief and that I would immediately draft an answer in that sense.

Kornilov then said to me: 'Yes, under the existing conditions it is my duty to remain at my post to the end. I must have my own way and force the Provisional Government to carry out my request. Please wire at once to General Krymov and tell him to hasten with the concentration of the troops near Petrograd.'

I sent a long telegram to the President of the Provisional Government. All who were acquainted with military questions, I said, realized perfectly that, under the existing conditions, when home policy was directed, *de facto*, by irresponsible organizations which had the most depraving influence on the army, it would not be possible to regenerate it. The army, as such, would inevitably and definitely go to pieces in two or three months' time, and Russia would be obliged to sign a shameful separate peace with Germany and Austro-Hungary, the consequences of which would be terrible for Russia. The Government had taken half-measures which did not actually relieve the situation, and only prolonged the agony and 'saved the Revolution', but did not save Russia. It was necessary, I said, in order to save her, to create a really strong authority and restore order in the rear.

I further went on to say that General Kornilov had put forward a whole series of requests which had never been fulfilled. Kornilov had no personal ambitions and designs but considered it indispensable to take energetic measures in view of restoring order in the army and in the whole of the country. The arrival of Savinkov and Lvov—who has made a proposal in the same sense to Kornilov in Kerensky's name—had only obliged the former to take a definite decision, which it was now too late to renounce. My telegram ended as follows:

'Having only the welfare of my country in view, I consider my duty to declare most decisively, and with a clear conscience, that it is now too late to stop the enterprise begun with your consent. This would only lead to a civil war, to the definitive ruin and decomposition of the army, and to an ignominious separate peace. . . .

'For the sake of the salvation of Russia, you must enter into General Kornilov's views, instead of dismissing him. . . .

'As for me, I cannot take upon myself the responsibility for

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

the army, if even for a short time, and do not consider it possible to take over the duties of Supreme Commander-in-Chief. . . .’

On September 10th the post of Supreme Commander-in-Chief was offered to the Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Front, General Klembovsky, who was invited to remain at Pskov.

General Klembovsky took advantage of this to refuse the offer, saying that it was impossible to direct the movements of the army from Pskov.

All the Commanders-in-Chief and many of the Army Commanders sent telegrams to Kerensky, and to the Stavka, expressing their solidarity with General Kornilov.

The Kornilov affair caused yet another crisis in the Government, which lasted until October 8th, since the left wing accused the right of having encouraged Kornilov in his ‘counter-revolutionary plot’. News of the affair spread throughout Russia and only served to increase the feeling of insecurity. Philips Price, travelling down the Volga at the time of the Kornilov episode, describes the differing reactions of third and first class passengers to the turn of events:

On September 9th I returned to Yaroslav and set out on a journey down the Volga. A passenger steamer passed from Riabinsk towards evening, and getting on board I went to the forepart of the vessel, where the third-class passengers were gathered. A crowd of peasants, fishermen, soldiers, pedlars and raftsmen were gathered round two gypsies, who were singing to an accordion a song of the steppes:

Once I lived as a Yamshchik [coachman] on the post road all alone,

And two black steeds with fiery eyes were all I called my own.

Hey! Raspashol! little rascals then! Pashol!

Hey! Raspashol! You loved ones of my heart!

‘Hey! Raspashol!’ roared the crowd of passengers.

‘Melons to sell! melons to sell!’ cried an itinerant fruit hawker.

‘How much do you want?’

‘Two roubles apiece.’

‘Walk round the ship two or three times, asking that price, and you’ll be ready to sell them for fifty kopecks.’

THE INTERLUDE: MARCH-NOVEMBER 1917

A whistle sounded from the bridge deck, and a voice roared. 'Clear that gangway!' A general commotion followed, in which ropes, babies, sacks and women were mixed up together. When it had subsided, I heard the plaintive wail of the gypsy rising above the hissing of the waves:

Cossack, do not drive my horse,
For I will not wander more;
I have no one now to love,
I have reached life's barren shore.

Sssh ! ! Sssh ! ! said the waves of the Volga.

Oh ! how lovely are your eyes,
Like stars of diamond in the night :
Love of you robs me of sleep,
How I hate your very sight !

'Raft sighted on the starboard !' came from the forecastle. 'All right,' said a voice on the bridge deck. A black object loomed out of the darkness and vanished astern.

'I told Peter Nikolaevich that the Committee won't allow any seed corn to leave the district this winter,' said a voice among a group of peasants, huddled up in a circle chewing bits of sunflower seed. 'Committees are making trouble everywhere this year,' said someone else. 'I tell you there will be no lower prices till the war ends,' said a third; 'there is not sufficient seed corn and I have only one horse; the other died last month.' 'There is no God but Allah, and Mahommed is his prophet,' came from a dark corner behind me. It was a Tartar, who had spread out his carpet and was turning to the Mecca of his hopes. 'There is no hope for us till the landlords and capitalists go,' growled someone. 'What's the use of a Revolution, if it only means that somebody else sits in the place of Nicholas Romanov?' 'Allah is great, there is no God but Allah,' murmured the Tartar, as he bowed his head to the ground. 'Old brother Ahmet is comforting himself with his prayers,' said a young soldier to his mate; 'pity he can't pray for us.' 'Perhaps he can, but do you think it would do any good, Kelia?' said the second. 'If I thought praying would save us from famine this winter, I should be on my knees all day,' said the first. 'Instead of which you attend meetings of the Soviet,' interjected an old peasant; 'you and the Tartar are godless fel-

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

lows, that's what I think of you both.'

How long this talking went on I do not remember, for towards eleven o'clock I lay down on a bit of old sacking and slept. At daybreak I rose, and got a supplementary ticket which enabled me to go to the first-class saloon. How quiet and respectable it was! So conscious of its superiority over the 'rabble' of the lower deck.

'I say there is not hope for Russia till we have a dictator who can discipline these dogs, and stop all this anarchy,' said a man in a general's uniform to his neighbour, a well-dressed civilian. Both were sitting at a mahogany table, taking coffee and rolls.

'Oh, yes, that's quite true,' said the civilian. 'Before the Revolution the peasants on our estate used to work well, but then, of course, you always had to be there with the threat of force to drive them: I suppose it is just the same with the soldiers in the army.'

'Yes, yes; they must have someone to rule over them. They flounder about in times like these and don't know how to act. They are a dark and ignorant lot. Only a strong man can deal with them. Kerensky is a well-meaning creature, but weak. Alekseev and Kornilov are the only people for Russia now, and I think the people would welcome them with open arms. I told that to a secretary of the French Embassy the other day in Petrograd.'

'Russia is helpless without foreigners to rule her,' said the well-dressed civilian. 'Let the English, French and Germans come here and put this mess right, and let us go to Paris and London,' he continued with a laugh.

'Look, dear,' said a gorgeous lady with coloured eyelashes and rouged lips, coming up to the General. 'I promised to show you these trinkets last night, but they were packed up. I bought them in Moscow for six hundred roubles apiece. Before the war they were fifty roubles each.'

'Where did you get them, my dear?' said the General.

'In a little shop in the Arbat. Alschwang's is no good now, except for dinner. By the way, I got magnificent caviar there last week.'

'Really, my dear,' said the General, 'I wish I had been with you.'

We arrived at Nizhnyi Novgorod, where I spent an exciting

day on shore, watching the masses react to the news of the Kornilov rebellion. Returning late to the ship I entered the first-class saloon for supper. Here I found most of the people in very high spirits. The General was following with a map the movements of Kornilov and his 'wild division' in the direction of Petrograd, stopping every now and then to say that he must get off at the next town and hurry to Kornilov's Staff, where there was much better work for him than visiting garrisons in the interior to report for Kerensky—the job he was supposed to be doing at the moment. The well-dressed civilian hoped that, when Kornilov got to Petrograd, he would declare a military dictatorship for a year, and organize an army for an offensive against the Germans next year. There must be a few English and French troops, of course, to stiffen the army, hunt out the Bolsheviks in the towns and Chernov's Socialist Revolutionaries in the villages, and then everything would be all right again. This view was not shared, however, by a young man, one of Kerensky's Commissioners of Police in Moscow and a Socialist Revolutionary of the right wing, who was on board. He was afraid that Kornilov was out for a complete restoration of Tsarism and a separate peace with Germany.

Next morning I returned to the third class behind the fore-castle. The gypsies had left, but a Moslem juggler from Central Asia was doing his tricks and charming snakes. A baby was screaming and the same fruit hawker was going about selling melons. A young soldier was in hot controversy with an Orenburg Cossack, who maintained that General Kornilov was not a traitor, that he was not rebelling against Kerensky, but was only going to clear Petrograd of criminals and then return to the front. 'How can that be so,' yelled the soldier; 'do you mean that Kerensky can't cope with criminals in Petrograd himself? Besides, the Soviet is with him, as soon as a general from the front begins to interfere in politics. Or, do you mean, that the Soviet is full of criminals?' But the Cossack remained silent. He would not allow himself to be drawn out of his depth. 'If Kornilov thinks he is going to have another offensive on the front as in July, he will be bitterly disappointed,' dryly observed one of the soldiers, as he looked up from a great piece of melon. 'If gentlemen like Kornilov don't look out, they will all find their way to the gallows,' remarked a young fisherman.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Kornilov managed to escape his captors and fled to Rostov-on-Don, where he took over command of an anti-Bolshevik army. He was killed by shellfire on April 13, 1918.

By October 1917 the Bolsheviks were in a much stronger position than they had been in the spring. They had skilfully played on the failures of the Government, from which they had stood apart in order to further their own cause. Elections to Soviets throughout the country in the summer and autumn showed a major swing to the Bolshevik side. The Kornilov affair had brought in many new supporters from amongst the soldiers in the capital.

Dissatisfaction with Kerensky's policy was widespread in all the parties represented in the Petrograd Soviet. In the middle of October its Executive Committee forced Kerensky to dissolve the Coalition formed on October 8th. Instead a Provisional Council of the Republic, or 'Pre-Parliament' as it was called, was attended by all parties on October 20th. This Council was intended to prepare for the long-awaited Constituent Assembly promised by the first Provisional Government in March. Elections for the Assembly were scheduled to take place in November.

This final compromise did not suit the Bolsheviks any more than earlier ones. Confident that they now had sufficient forces behind them to carry out an independent programme, they walked out of the first session of the Pre-Parliament. It was obvious to all as they left that they intended to start yet another uprising, this time of their own making.

Sukhanov was present at the opening session of the Pre-Parliament. He sensed that the Russian Revolution was about to pass into its extreme stage, even further to the political left than he, as a Socialist Revolutionary and member of the Petrograd Soviet, was willing to travel:

On October 20th at 5 o'clock, amidst rain and slush, Kerensky opened the Pre-Parliament. This was no mere democratic conference! This time Kerensky wasn't late. Also, something unheard of in the Revolution happened: the Pre-Parliament opened on time. No one could have foreseen that. And that, it was said, was why there were not very many people in the hall and it was

just as boring and dreary in the Marian Palace as in the streets of Petersburg.

It was quite late, and happening for some reason to go in by a way I didn't know, I wandered about for a long time through the endless corridors and rooms of the Palace. I came out somehow into the Press Gallery, from which I heard the end of the speech from the throne. The head of the Government and the State was speaking in hollowly official but loftily patriotic tones. I don't remember, nor can I extract from the newspaper accounts, one living concrete idea. In any case the entire speech was full of the 'war dangers' under the impact of the latest events at the front and the news, just received, that the Germans were threatening Reval. . . . But really, all the political interest of the opening of the Pre-Parliament revolved around the Bolsheviki.

Their whole large fraction arrived late, almost at the same time as I did. They had had an important and stormy meeting at Smolny [*the Bolshevik headquarters*], which had only just ended. They had been making a final decision on what to do about the Pre-Parliament: stay or go? After a first session, at which the question was left hanging in the air, they had had a bitter dispute. This, as a piquant incident in Smolny circles, was of great interest. The opinions of the Bolsheviki were almost evenly divided, and it wasn't known which way the majority would go. It was reported that Lenin was demanding that they should leave. Trotsky also defended this position with great vigour. The right wing was demanding that the rupture with the Pre-Parliament be postponed at least until the moment the Pre-Parliament exposed itself on some issue, for instance refused to make some important decision in the interests of the working class. They said the rupture would otherwise not be understood by the people. But Trotsky, for whom all questions were settled, insisted that there should be no obscurities, that the boats should be conclusively and publicly burnt. Let both hostile armies see and understand!

In an interval, a sensational rumour circulated in the corridors of the Marian Palace; Trotsky had won by a majority of two or three votes, and the Bolsheviki would leave the Pre-Parliament immediately. That was the least of it; the Menshevik and SR leaders, very disturbed, were saying that before they left the Bolsheviki would create a tremendous row. The most unlikely

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

rumours passed from mouth to mouth. A kind of panic began. One of the officials was told off to make private inquiries of the Bolsheviks.

‘Nonsense!’ answered Trotsky, standing not far off from me in the rotunda adjoining the meeting hall, ‘nonsense, a few pistol-shots. . . .’

But Trotsky looked rather nervous—in anticipation of the shots. The Right Bolsheviks were grumbling angrily. This whole affair was very disagreeable to me, and I didn’t go over to Trotsky.

At the end of the session Trotsky was given the floor for an emergency statement. There was a sensation in the hall. For most of the bourgeois the famous leader of the bandits, idlers and hooligans was still a novelty.

‘The officially stated aim of the Democratic Conference,’ Trotsky began, ‘was the elimination of the personal régime that fed the Kornilov revolt, and the creation of a responsible Government capable of liquidating the war and promoting the convocation of a Constituent Assembly at the appointed time. Meanwhile, behind the back of the Democratic Conference, directly contrary results have been achieved by way of the back-stage deals of Citizen Kerensky, the Cadets, and the SR and Menshevik leaders. A Government has been formed in and around which both avowed and clandestine Kornilovites play the leading role. The non-responsibility of this Government has been formally established. . . . If the propertied elements were really preparing for the Constituent Assembly in a month and a half, they would have no grounds for defending the non-responsibility of the Government now. The whole point is that the bourgeois classes have set themselves the goal of preventing the Constituent Assembly. . . .’

There was an uproar. Shouts from the Right: ‘Lies!’ Trotsky tried to show complete indifference, and didn’t raise his voice.

‘In the fields of industry, agriculture, and supply the policy of the Government and the possessing classes is aggravating the havoc produced by the war. The propertied classes, who provoked the uprising, are now moving to crush it and are openly steering a course for the bony hand of hunger, which is expected to strangle the revolution and the Constituent Assembly first of all.

‘Nor is foreign policy any less criminal. After forty months of

war the capital is threatened by mortal danger. In response to this a plan has been put forward for the transfer of the Government to Moscow. The idea of surrendering the revolutionary capital to German troops does not arouse the slightest indignation amongst the bourgeois classes; on the contrary it is accepted as a natural link in the general policy that is supposed to help them in their counter-revolutionary conspiracy.'

The uproar grew worse. The patriots leaped from their seats and wouldn't allow Trotsky to go on speaking. Shouts about Germany, the sealed car and so on. One shout stood out: 'Bastard!' I make the point now that *throughout* the Revolution, both before and after the Bolsheviks, neither in the Tauride, nor in Smolny, however stormy the sessions and however tense the atmosphere, there was *never once* such an outcry at the meetings of our rank-and-file. But it was enough for us to come into the fine society of the Marian Palace, the company of polished lawyers, professors, financiers, landowners, and generals, for the tavern atmosphere of the bourgeois State Duma to revive immediately.

The chairman called the meeting to order. Trotsky was standing there as though none of this were any concern of his, and finally found it possible to go on.

'We, the Bolshevik fraction of the Social-Democratic Party, declare that with this Government of national treachery and with this "Council" we——'

The uproar took on an obviously hopeless character. The majority of the Right got to their feet with the obvious intention of stopping the speech. The chairman called the speaker to order. Trotsky, beginning to lose his temper, and speaking by now through the hubbub, finished:

'—that we have nothing in common with them. We have nothing in common with that murderous intrigue against the people which is being conducted behind the official scenes. We refuse to shield it either directly or indirectly for a single day. In leaving the Provisional Council we call upon the workers, soldiers, and peasants of all Russia to be stalwart and courageous. Petersburg is in danger, the Revolution is in danger, the nation is in danger. The Government is intensifying that danger. The ruling parties are increasing it. Only the nation can save itself and the country. We appeal to the people: Long live an im-

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

mediate, honourable democratic peace, all power to the Soviets, all land to the people, long live the Constituent Assembly!’

Trotsky got off the platform, and a few dozen men of the extreme Left left the hall amidst hubbub and shouting. The majority gazed after them disdainfully, waving their hands—good riddance! The majority saw nothing: after all, this was only sixty specimens of a peculiar breed of wild beast who were leaving the society of mankind. Just the Bolsheviki alone. Good riddance! It was calmer and more agreeable without them.

But we, the closest neighbours of the Bolsheviki and their companions-in-arms, sat there utterly depressed by all that had happened.

On October 23rd, three days after walking out of the Pre-Parliament, the Bolshevik leaders met secretly in Sukhanov's flat. Sukhanov's wife was a Bolshevik and acted as hostess. Ever since the July days Lenin had realized that only an armed uprising could achieve the Bolsheviks' aims, but he had bided his time, waiting for a suitable opportunity. After the showdown in the Pre-Parliament, he considered that the Bolsheviks should take action. The Constituent Assembly was due to meet in the near future and would almost certainly fail to produce a majority for the Bolsheviks: force was needed before the voice of the nation pronounced itself against the Bolsheviks. Zinoviev and Kamenev, two of Lenin's most powerful lieutenants, did not agree with Lenin on the timing of the uprising, but Lenin won a large majority at the meeting, which also chose the first Politburo of the Bolshevik Central Committee. The Bolsheviks' hour had come at last.

CHAPTER V

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

A young American journalist called John Reed has left us the most lively account of the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks. Lenin wrote of his book, *Ten Days That Shook the World*: 'It gives a truthful and most vivid exposition of the events so significant to the comprehension of what really is the Proletarian Revolution and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.' Needless to say, Reed's sympathies lay with the Bolsheviks for him to earn such praise. Indeed he was an idealist and a socialist who acclaimed the Bolshevik cause mainly because it promised to take Russia out of the war: he had very hazy ideas as to Lenin's other political aims.

Reed arrived in Petrograd late in August 1917. He managed to be present at most of the great events in the city during the Bolshevik Revolution. In preparation for the coup against the existing Government, the Bolsheviks set up their military headquarters in the Smolny Institute. Reed visited Smolny frequently in the days just before the overthrow of Kerensky's Government:

Smolny Institute, headquarters of the Central Committee and of the Petrograd Soviet, lay . . . beside the wide Neva. I went there on a street-car, moving snail-like with a groaning noise through the cobbled, muddy streets, and jammed with people. At the end of the line rose the graceful smoke-blue cupolas of Smolny Convent outlined in dull gold, beautiful; and beside it the great barracks-like façade of Smolny Institute, two hundred yards long and three lofty stories high, the Imperial arms carved hugely in stone still insolent over the entrance. . . .

Under the old régime a famous convent school for the daughters of the Russian nobility, patronized by the Tsarina herself, the Institute had been taken over by the revolutionary organizations of workers and soldiers. Within were more than a hundred huge rooms, white and bare, on their doors enamelled plaques still

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

informing the passer-by that within was 'Ladies' Class-room Number 4' or 'Teachers' Bureau'; but over these hung crudely-lettered signs, evidence of the vitality of the new order: 'Central Committee of the Petrograd Soviet' and 'Central Executive Committee' and 'Bureau of Foreign Affairs'; 'Union of Socialist Soldiers', 'Central Committee of the All-Russian Trade Unions', 'Factory Shop Committees', 'Central Army Committee', and the central offices and caucus-rooms of the political parties. . . .

The long, vaulted corridors, lit by rare electric lights, were thronged with hurrying shapes of soldiers and workmen, some bent under the weight of huge bundles of newspapers, proclamations, printed propaganda of all sorts. The sound of their heavy boots made a deep and incessant thunder on the wooden floor. . . . Signs were posted up everywhere: 'Comrades! For the sake of your health, preserve cleanliness!' Long tables stood at the head of the stairs on every floor, and on the landings, heaped with pamphlets and the literature of the different political parties, for sale. . . .

The spacious, low-ceilinged refectory downstairs was still a dining-room. For two roubles I bought a ticket entitling me to dinner, and stood in line with a thousand others, waiting to get to the long serving-tables, where twenty men and women were ladling from immense cauldrons cabbage soup, hunks of meat and piles of kasha, slabs of black bread. Five kopecks paid for tea in a tin cup. From a basket one grabbed a greasy wooden spoon.

. . . The benches along the wooden tables were packed with hungry proletarians, wolfing their food, plotting, shouting rough jokes across the room. . . .

Upstairs was another eating-place, reserved for the Central Committee—though everyone went there. Here could be had bread thickly buttered and endless glasses of tea. . . .

In the south wing on the second floor was the great hall of meetings, the former ballroom of the Institute. A lofty white room lighted by glazed-white chandeliers holding hundreds of ornate electric bulbs, and divided by two rows of massive columns; at one end a dais, flanked with two tall many-branched light standards, and a gold frame behind, from which the Imperial portrait had been cut. Here on festal occasions had been banked brilliant military and ecclesiastical uniforms, a setting for Grand Duchesses. . . .

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

Just across the hall outside was the office of the Credentials Committee for the Congress of Soviets [*which met on November 7th, the day of the fall of the Provisional Government*]. I stood there watching the new delegates come in—burly, bearded soldiers, workmen in black blouses, a few long-haired peasants. The girl in charge . . . smiled contemptuously. ‘These are very different people from the delegates to the S’ezd’ (Congress),’ she remarked. ‘See how rough and ignorant they look! The Dark People. . . .’ It was true; the depths of Russia had been stirred, and it was the bottom which came uppermost now. The Credentials Committee, appointed by the old Central Committee, was challenging delegate after delegate, on the ground that they had been illegally elected. Karakhan, member of the Bolshevik Central Committee, simply grinned. ‘Never mind,’ he said. ‘When the time comes we’ll see that you get your seats. . . .’

Reed managed to see Trotsky on several occasions at Smolny. In the interview recorded below we see Trotsky already planning for the European communist revolution, even before the accomplishment of the Russian coup:

I spent a great deal of time at Smolny. It was no longer easy to get in. Double rows of sentries guarded the outer gates, and once inside the front door there was a long line of people waiting to be let in, four at a time, to be questioned as to their identity and their business. Passes were given out, and the pass system was changed every few hours; for spies continually sneaked through. . . .

One day as I came up to the outer gate I saw Trotsky and his wife just ahead of me. They were halted by a soldier. Trotsky searched through his pockets, but could find no pass.

‘Never mind,’ he said finally. ‘You know me. My name is Trotsky.’

‘You haven’t got a pass,’ answered the soldier stubbornly. ‘You cannot go in. Names don’t mean anything to me.’

‘But I am president of the Petrograd Soviet.’

‘Well,’ replied the soldier, ‘if you’re as important a fellow as that you must at least have one little paper.’

Trotsky was very patient. ‘Let me see the Commandant,’ he said. The soldier hesitated, grumbling something about not want-

ing to disturb the Commandant for every devil that came along. He beckoned finally to the soldier in command of the guard. Trotsky explained matters to him. 'My name is Trotsky,' he repeated.

'Trotsky?' The other soldier scratched his head. 'I've heard the name somewhere,' he said at length. 'I guess it's all right. You can go in, comrade. . . .'

. . . On October 30th, by appointment, I went up to a small, bare room in the attic of Smolny, to talk with Trotsky. In the middle of the room he sat on a rough chair at a bare table. Few questions from me were necessary; he talked rapidly and steadily, for more than an hour. The substance of his talk, in his own words, I give here:

'The Provisional Government is absolutely powerless. . . . Now, during the Revolution, one sees revolts of peasants who are tired of waiting for their promised land; and all over the country, in all the toiling classes, the same disgust is evident. This domination by the bourgeoisie is only possible by means of civil war. The Kornilov method is the only way by which the bourgeoisie can control. But it is force which the bourgeoisie lacks. . . . The Army is with us. The conciliators and pacifists, Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, have lost all authority—because the struggle between the peasants and the landlords, between the workers and the employers, between the soldiers and the officers, has become more bitter, more irreconcilable than ever. Only by the concerted action of the popular mass, only by the victory of proletarian dictatorship, can the Revolution be achieved and the people saved. . . .

'The Soviets are the most perfect representatives of the people—perfect in their revolutionary experience, in their ideas and objects. Based directly upon the army in the trenches, the workers in the factories, and the peasants in the fields, they are the backbone of the Revolution.

'There has been an attempt to create a power without the Soviets—and only powerlessness has been created. Counter-revolutionary schemes of all sorts are now being hatched in the corridors of the Council of the Russian Republic. The Cadet party represents the counter-revolution militant. On the other side, the Soviets represent the cause of the people. Between the two camps there are no groups of serious importance. . . . It is the *lutte*

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

finale. The bourgeois counter-revolution organizes all its forces and waits for the moment to attack us. Our answer will be decisive. We will complete the work scarcely begun in March, and advanced during the Kornilov affair. . . .’

He went on to speak of the new Government’s foreign policy :

‘Our first act will be to call for an immediate armistice on all fronts, and a conference of peoples to discuss democratic peace terms. The quantity of democracy we get in the peace settlement depends on the quantity of revolutionary response there is in Europe. If we create here a Government of the Soviets, that will be a powerful factor for immediate peace in Europe; for this Government will address itself directly and immediately to all peoples, over the heads of their governments, proposing an armistice. At the moment of the conclusion of peace the pressure of the Russian Revolution will be in the direction of “no annexations, no indemnities, the right of self-determination of peoples”, and a *Federated Republic of Europe*. . . .’

‘At the end of this war I see Europe recreated, not by the diplomats, but by the proletariat. The Federated Republic of Europe—the United States of Europe—that is what must be. National autonomy no longer suffices. Economic revolution demands the abolition of national frontiers. If Europe is to remain split in national groups, then Imperialism will recommence its work. Only a Federated Republic of Europe can give peace to the world.’ He smiled—that fine, faintly ironical smile of his. ‘But without the action of the European masses, these ends cannot be realized—now. . . .’

We have seen how the Kronstadt sailors nearly forced Lenin’s hand in July. Once again, in November, sailors took a lead in the Revolution by capturing the Baltic Fleet for the Bolsheviki, while tension was mounting in Petrograd. The events are recorded by I. Rengarten, the Chief Intelligence Officer on the flagship of Rear-Admiral Rasvozov, the Commander of the Baltic Fleet. The Bolsheviki were led by Dybenko, the sailor-president of the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet [the CCBF].

November 6th

A little while before, Dybenko paid us a visit, bringing the news that the Assembly of Soviets in Petrograd and the Petrograd Soviet were being attacked, with the help of the cadets, and that

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

our companies had decided to help the Soviets by sending three torpedo-boats for the support of a landing party from Kronstadt. Dybenko and some other delegates had already, before our arrival, despatched this request to the torpedo-boats, while the Divisional Commander and a commissar came direct to us.

We received an open radio-telegram from the executive committee of Kronstadt: 'The Petrograd Soviet is in danger . . . the newspapers *The Path of Labour* and *The Soldier's Voice* have been suspended; an attack is being prepared by cadets and other reactionary persons.' Whether this is true or a mere attempt at provocation is impossible to tell.

Rasvozov wavered. Cherkassky regarded consent to the despatching of torpedo-boats quite unthinkable; I maintained that we could not in any circumstances involve ourselves in a civil war. The ships' companies passed the following resolution today:

'Hail to the Soviet of the Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies! . . . We shall come forward at the first call of the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet—we shall die or conquer. Better death than dishonour!'

9.45 p.m. Three commissars of the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet have made their appearance, bringing with them instruction to the Commander to despatch immediately to Petrograd the *Zabaika*, *Strastnyi* and *Metkii*, . . . 'The commissars to be present at the deciphering of the telegrams and the giving of orders to the staff.'

The Commander of the Fleet spoke with Petrograd. Something is brewing there: the bridges are closed, there is some talk of arresting the Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet . . . it is even rumoured that troops are leaving the front for the capital. The chief has gone to a special conference of the CCBF [*Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet*]. I spoke by telephone with Reval. . . . In his opinion, a crisis has arisen in the capital with all the chances in favour of the Bolsheviks. He has taken with him two parcels from the General Naval Headquarters, ciphers and all sorts of secret documents. . . . We have reached a new and still more menacing stage of the Revolution.

November 7th. Wednesday. Helsingfors. *Krechet* (the Flagship).

At about midnight I had a talk by wireless with Petrograd. The orderly officer at the General Naval Headquarters reported that

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

so far nothing had been done by either side; the town was comparatively quiet; guards had been removed from some of the bridges; the cinemas were open. While I was still talking, Dybenko came into the transmitting room. He is a tall, robust man with a luxuriant growth of hair, a black beard and a pleasant, good-looking face; he was dressed in a grey jacket and held in his hand a soft, broad-brimmed hat; he bore himself modestly and politely, but with perfect self-confidence.

Rasvozov has returned from the special meeting of the CCBF. He was received with every show of cordiality; the representatives listened attentively to his strong protests against sending torpedo-boats to Petrograd. But his words made no impression; although he emphasized the fact that he was particularly averse to giving armed support either to the Government or to its foes. The assembly unanimously demanded the immediate despatch of the torpedo-boats.

He was told that if the Soviets were to gain power, the principle of elective representation would be introduced into all branches of life, and that he, Rasvozov, was sure to be elected. Rasvozov answered that he would refuse the honour.

At about two o'clock at night we had a telephone call from the Naval Minister; he had only just returned from a sitting of the Provisional Government. The atmosphere in the capital was extremely strained and alarming, but so far there had been no 'outbursts': the Provisional Government was making desperate efforts to find a peaceful solution of the situation. No arrests had been made, only a few measures against rioting and anarchy had been passed. A whole series of telegrams had arrived from the front, enjoining the Government to re-establish order in the rear, and particularly in Petrograd, and affirming loyalty of the troops to the Provisional Government.

Following upon this conversation a commissar from the CCBF came in. Rasvozov informed him of Verderevsky's view, pointing out to him that it did not conform to the tales from the CCBF. Hence arose a dispute: a sailor-commissar insisted upon the necessity of handing over all power to the Soviets, and was firmly convinced of the beneficial results which would arise from such a reform. Rasvozov argued with him. . . . The dispute was to no purpose; the opinions voiced on both sides were old and stale; but the whole was characteristic of the difference of outlook.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The general trend of the arguments put forward by the Bolshevik commissar came to this: if the Soviets failed to seize the power, then the fleet was doomed. It would no longer be necessary, and the people would refuse to fight. . . . It was suggested to him that the problem of allotting power could not be decided by a manifest minority, since the preponderating portion of the army seemed to be anti-Bolshevik; but he replied: 'Well, if the army ranges itself on the side of the country and does not support the fleet, let it fight on. What can it do without the fleet?'

There was trampling of feet, loud talk and shouting on board the *Poliarnaia Zvezda*; this noise was getting on my nerves. But if it had been anything serious the flag-officer would have made a report. I felt too lazy to make inquiries.

A strange occurrence has taken place. Some time before midnight, a sailor from the *Vidnyi* came on board the *Krechet* asking for a personal interview with the Commander of the Fleet. When questioned by the flag-officer on duty, he became confused and attempted to retreat. Dybenko and Demchinsky chased him all over the ship but failed to catch him; he disappeared as mysteriously as he had come.

Later there was more noise, more trampling of feet, more shouting from the crew—'To the front', 'Comrades!' . . . It gave me the impression that the company had turned out for an armed demonstration. They were up to something.

3.40 p.m. I have just received the squadron-commander of the torpedo-boat *Metkii*; he showed me an order from the CCBF to 'proceed to Petrograd at dawn'.

I told him of the CCBF conference, and of the position taken up by the Commander of the Fleet; and also impressed him with the necessity of submitting to pressure if, after all attempts at persuasion, the ships' companies still insisted on the expedition. He asked me whether it would be advisable to raise the signal in the morning: 'Are we to proceed in the appointed direction?' We decided against it, so as to avoid placing the chief in a difficult position, but I told him that he could put down in writing that it was through me that he had received the Admiral's instructions. I am deeply sorry for him.

9.30 a.m. *Zabiaka*, *Samson* and *Metkii* sailed for Petrograd at dawn. *Strastnyi* was due to sail also, but, fortunately for her commander, was prevented owing to a breakdown.

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

The night's noise was indeed due to a collection of armed men : approximately 1,500 volunteers from various ships formed a 'landing party expedition', which went by train to Petrograd to support the Soviet.

The torpedo-boats have also provided fighting detachments.

11 a.m. I have spent the morning with Cherkassky in Rasvozov's cabin. We only occasionally exchanged a remark—just sat waiting. . . . Cherkassky merely said: 'They all lie; and we do too!'

11.30 a.m. Rudensky, commander of the *Grazhdanin*, came on board. He declared that he repudiated all responsibility for the fighting capacity of his ship, as all his most indispensable men were leaving in masses and joining the detachments in Petrograd, in the conviction that they were 'helping on the Revolution'.

The sailors openly say that 'if the Soviets do not get the power, they [*the sailors*] have no more use for the Fleet . . . have, in fact, no more interest in anything . . . that they do not want to be governed by capital, but if it cannot be thrown off by any means, it matters little to them whether the capital be Russian, German or French. . . .'

3 p.m. Cherkassky called for me. He had with him 'the slyest of the sly'—A. M. Schastny [*Captain, afterward Commander, of the Baltic Fleet. Shot in 1918*]. They silently handed me a telegram, which had been deciphered without the supervision of the controller, as we are not yet actually under control, although men have already been sent for the purpose. The contents of the telegram were as follows: 'By order of the Commander-in-Chief, such and such detachments, supplied with requisite artillery, are to be sent to Petrograd immediately. Compliance with this order is to be reported without delay. Signed, General Lukirsky, Chief of the General Staff.'

Cherkassky asked for my opinion. I replied that the answers should be in the negative. It seemed to me inconsistent to despatch troops, when only yesterday we had declared that we refused to allow the torpedo-boats to sail for Petrograd. In any case, it was not a military order. They both called me a simpleton and unfolded their plan of action. The answer was to be worded thus: '(1) Telegram No. — has been deciphered. (2) We are under control and therefore beg that we should not be sent cipher telegrams.'

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The cadets [*Officers' School students*] and some sections of the population of Petrograd have, apparently, decided to resist the attempts of the Bolsheviks to grasp the power—but that is all. Nobody shows the least desire to defend Kerensky and his Government.

Judging by the report of K. Zubov, who has only just left Petrograd, the atmosphere there is greatly strained, but both parties shrink from coming out into the open, neither side wishing to be the first to attack. Whose nerves will prove the stronger?

A landing party from Kronstadt has already disembarked.

5.45 p.m. We had news by telephone from Petrograd that the *Aurora* and the *Amur* have sailed up the Neva, that the Dvortzovyi Square has been barricaded and that street fighting is going on everywhere. . . .

6.40 p.m. My wily friends have not sent the telegram they had worked out, after all. They burnt it and sent another one instead: 'Control has been instituted here . . . over all orders, either given or received.' They will understand.

November 8th

1 p.m. The thing has happened, the Provisional Government has fallen. Last night we received a wireless message to that effect.

On the evening of November 6th Reed attended a preliminary meeting of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets which was to open officially on the 7th. Led by Dan and Martov, the Mensheviks attempted to make a last stand against the Bolsheviks' plan to stage an armed uprising against Kerensky's Government. The Mensheviks still retained a majority in the Central Committee, but Lenin and Trotsky relied on the support of quite a large section of the Communist Party in Russia: Trotsky's Military Revolutionary Committee had won over all but two regiments of the Petrograd garrison; the crucial moment of the Revolution was arriving.

As night fell the great hall filled with soldiers and workmen, a monstrous dun mass, deep-humming in a blue maze of smoke. The old Central Committee had finally decided to welcome the delegates to that new Congress which would mean its own ruin

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

—and perhaps the ruin of the revolutionary order it had built. At this meeting, however, only members of the Central Committee could vote. . . .

It was after midnight when Gotz took the chair and Dan rose to speak, in a tense silence, which seemed to me almost menacing.

‘The hours in which we live appear in the most tragic colours,’ he said. ‘The enemy is at the gates of Petrograd, the forces of the democracy are trying to organize to resist him, and yet we await bloodshed in the streets of the capital, and famine threatens to destroy not only our homogeneous Government, but the Revolution itself. . . .’

‘The masses are sick and exhausted. They have no interest in the Revolution. If the Bolsheviki start anything, that will be the end of the Revolution. . . .’ (Cries, ‘That’s a lie!’) ‘The counter-revolutionists are waiting with the Bolsheviki to begin riots and massacres. . . . If there is any *vystuplenie* [attack], there will be no Constituent Assembly. . . .’ (Cries, ‘Lie! Shame!’)

‘It is inadmissible that in the zone of military operations the Petrograd garrison shall not submit to the orders of the Staff. . . . You must obey the orders of the Staff and of the Central Committee elected by you. All power to the Soviets—that means death! Robbers and thieves are waiting for the moment to loot and burn. . . . When you have such slogans put before you, “Enter the houses, take away the shoes and clothes from the bourgeoisie—” ’

(Tumult. Cries, ‘No such slogan! A lie! A lie!’) ‘Well, it may start differently, but it will end that way!’

‘The Central Committee has full power to act, and must be obeyed. . . . We are not afraid of bayonets. . . . The Central Committee will defend the Revolution with its body. . . .’ (Cries, ‘It was a dead body long ago!’)

Immense continued uproar, in which his voice could be heard screaming, as he pounded the desk, ‘Those who are urging this are committing a crime!’

Voice: ‘You committed a crime long ago, when you captured the power and turned it over to the bourgeoisie!’

Gotz, ringing the chairman’s bell: ‘Silence, or I’ll have you put out!’

Voice: ‘Try it!’ (Cheers and whistling.)

‘Now concerning our policy about peace.’ (Laughter.)

‘Unfortunately Russia can no longer support the continuation

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

of the war. There is going to be peace, but not permanent peace—not a democratic peace. . . . Today, at the Council of the Republic, in order to avoid bloodshed, we passed an order of the day demanding the surrender of the land to the Land Committees and immediate peace negotiations. . . .’ (Laughter and cries, ‘Too late!’)

Then, for the Bolsheviki, Trotsky mounted the tribune, borne on a wave of roaring applause that burst into cheers and a rising house, thunderous. His thin, pointed face was positively Mephistophelian in its expression of malicious irony.

‘Dan’s tactics prove that the masses—the great, dull, indifferent masses—are absolutely with him!’ (Titanic mirth.) He turned towards the chairman, dramatically. ‘When we spoke of giving the land to the peasants, you were against it. We told the peasants, “If they don’t give it to you, take it yourselves!” and the peasants followed our advice. And now you advocate what we did six months ago. . . .’

‘I don’t think Kerensky’s order to suspend the death penalty in the army was dictated by his ideals, I think Kerensky was persuaded by the Petrograd garrison, which refused to obey him. . . .’

‘The history of the last seven months shows that the masses have left the Mensheviki. The Mensheviki and the Social Revolutionaries conquered the Cadets and then, when they got the power, they gave it to the Cadets. . . .’

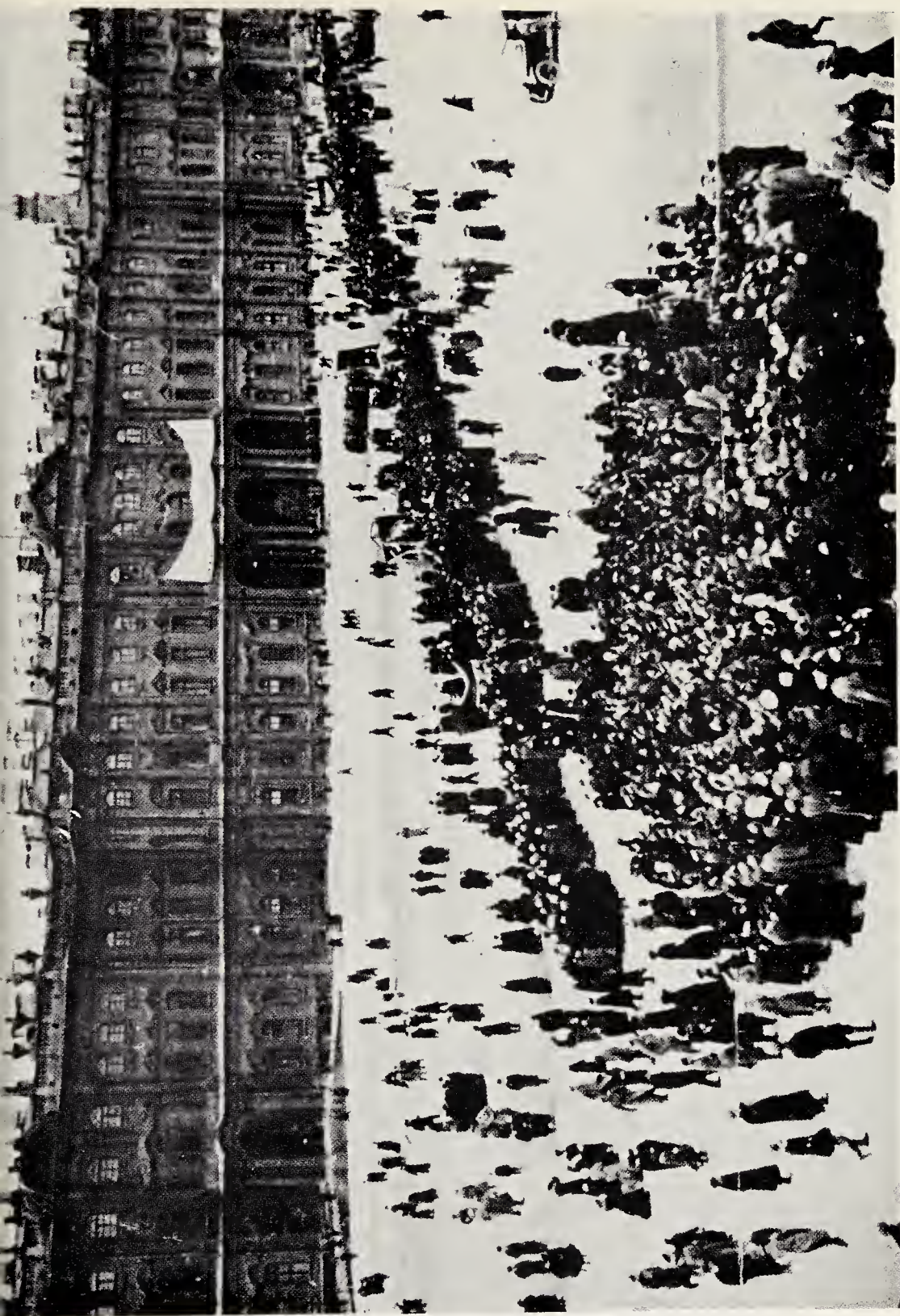
‘Dan tells you that you have no right to make an insurrection. Insurrection is the right of all revolutionists! When the down-trodden masses revolt, it is their right. . . .’

Then the long-faced, cruel-tongued Lieber, greeted with groans and laughter.

‘Engels and Marx said that the proletariat had no right to take power until it was ready for it. In a bourgeois revolution like this . . . the seizure of power by the masses means the tragic end of the Revolution. . . . Trotsky, as a Social Democratic theorist, is himself opposed to what he is now advocating. . . .’ (Cries, ‘Enough! Down with him!’)

Martov, constantly interrupted: ‘The Internationalists are not opposed to the transmission of power to the democracy, but they disapprove of the methods of the Bolsheviki. This is not the moment to seize power. . . .’

Again Dan took the floor, violently protesting against the action of the Military Revolutionary Committee, which had sent



5. DEMONSTRATION BEFORE THE WINTER PALACE, PETROGRAD, 1917
(Photo: Radio Times Hulton Picture Library)



6. REBELS STORMING THE WINTER PALACE
NOVEMBER 1917
(Photo: Planet News)

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

a commissar to seize the office of *Izvestiia* and censor the paper. The wildest uproar followed. Martov tried to speak, but could not be heard. Delegates of the army and the Baltic Fleet stood up all over the hall, shouting that the Soviet was *their* Government. . . .

Amid the wildest confusion Ehrlich offered a resolution, appealing to the workers and soldiers to remain calm and not to respond to provocations to demonstrate, recognizing the necessity of immediately creating a Committee of Public Safety and asking the Provisional Government at once to pass decrees transferring the land to the peasants and beginning the peace negotiations. . . .

Then up leaped Volodarsky, shouting harshly that the Central Committee, on the eve of the Congress, had no right to assume the functions of the Congress. The Central Committee was practically dead, he said, and the resolution was simply a trick to bolster up its waning power. . . .

'As for us, Bolsheviki, we will not vote on this resolution!' Whereupon all the Bolsheviki left the hall and the resolution was passed. . . .

Toward four in the morning [of November 7th, the day of the Bolshevik coup] I met Zorin in the outer hall, a rifle slung from his shoulder.

'We're moving!' said he, calmly but with satisfaction. 'We pinched the Assistant Minister of Justice and the Minister of Religions. They're down in the cellar now. One regiment is on the march to capture the Telephone Exchange, another the Telegraph Agency, another the State Bank. The Red Guard is out. . . .' [See the Glossary.]

On the steps of Smolny, in the chill dark, we first saw the Red Guard—a huddled group of boys in workmen's clothes, carrying guns with bayonets, talking nervously together.

Far over the still roofs westward came the sound of scattered rifle fire, where the *yunkers* [Officers' School students] were trying to open the bridges over the Neva, to prevent the factory workers and soldiers of the Vyborg quarter from joining the Soviet forces in the centre of the city; and the Kronstadt sailors were closing them again. . . .

Behind us great Smolny, bright with lights, hummed like a gigantic hive. . . .

The press organ of the Social Revolutionaries, Delo Naroda,

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

gave a very subdued picture of the Petrograd scene at the height of the Revolution, November 7th, the day of the storming of the Winter Palace, the seat of Kerensky's Government. Two of the paper's chief supporters, Kerensky and P. Sorokin, wrote more turbulent accounts in their private memoirs (see pages 227-8 and 241-2 below):

Petrograd looked as usual during the course of the day. Street-cars ran almost as usual. Here and there their routes were changed, owing to the opening of the Nikolaevskii Bridge to let warships pass. As usual, they were overcrowded. . . . Soldiers from every part of the garrison are on guard and on picket duty . . . to preserve order. . . . The Military Revolutionary Committee . . . has also issued appeals to the people. . . .

With an exception here and there, there were few reports of disorders on the street in the course of the day. . . .

All the streets leading to the Mariinskii Palace were barricaded, but this should not be taken too seriously. These barricades were nothing more than piles of wood . . . across the street. . . . In some parts of the streets automobiles were stationed . . . to stop traffic. . . . By evening, traffic on the streets was reduced to a minimum. . . .

According to information in possession of Smolny there was a general meeting of the 1st, 4th and 14th Cossack regiments at which it was decided not to obey the orders of the Provisional Government but at the same time not to come out against it. . . .

The Bolshevik commissar in command of the cruiser Aurora reports on the action of his ship, which had such a deep psychological impact on the members of the Provisional Government by training its guns on them as they sat imprisoned in the Winter Palace on the banks of the Neva:

The cruiser *Aurora* had been under repairs at the Franco-Russian yards and was supposed to leave Petrograd on November 4th to try out its new machinery. But in view of the approaching Second Congress of Soviets, the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet issued an order postponing our departure indefinitely. The sailors of the *Aurora* were told that they would have to take an active part in the defence of the Soviet Congress and, possibly, in the

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

uprising. On November 6th the Military Revolutionary Committee appointed me commissar of the cruiser *Aurora*. A special meeting of the sailors' committee was called in the presence of the commander and other officers. I briefly explained the instructions I had received, saying that I was going to execute all orders of the Military Revolutionary Committee . . . regardless of the views of the commanding officers. In the evening (November 6th) instructions were received from the Military Revolutionary Committee to reopen traffic on the Nikolaevskii Bridge. . . . It was necessary to move the ship closer to the bridge, and I gave orders to get up steam . . . and weigh anchor. . . .

The commander refused to pilot the ship on the pretext that the *Aurora* would not be able to move on the Neva. I gave orders to take soundings in the channel of the Neva, which showed that the cruiser could pass quite easily. . . .

At 3.30 a.m. the ship cast anchor near the Nikolaevskii Bridge. We worked all day, November 7th, to bring the ship into fighting order. . . . Towards evening we received orders from the Military Revolutionary Committee to fire a few blank shots upon receiving signal from the Peter and Paul Fortress and, if necessary, to shell [the Winter Palace] with shrapnel. There was no occasion, however, for the latter, as the Winter Palace soon surrendered. . . .

P. Sorokin, the Socialist Revolutionary whom we met in March 1917 and whom we meet again later as one of the deputies to the ill-fated Constituent Assembly which opened in January 1918, tried to reach the Winter Palace in order to prevent bloodshed:

Lying ill all day on my bed, I listened to the steady booming of the cannon and the spatter of machine-guns and crack of rifles. Over the telephone I learned that the Bolsheviki had brought up from Kronstadt the warship *Aurora* and had opened fire on the Winter Palace, demanding the surrender of members of the Provisional Government, still barricaded there. At seven in the evening I went to the Municipal Duma. With many matters before us, the immediate horror that faced us was this situation at the Winter Palace. There was a regiment of women and the military cadets were bravely resisting an overwhelming force of Bolshevik troops, and over the telephone Minister Konovalov was appealing for aid. Poor women, poor lads, their situation was

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

desperate, for we knew that the wild sailors, after taking the Palace, would probably tear them to pieces. What could we do? After breathless council it was decided that all of us, the Soviets, Municipalities, Committees of Socialist Parties, members of the Council of the Republic, should go in procession to the Winter Palace and do our utmost to rescue the Ministers, the women soldiers, and the cadets. Even as we prepared to go, over the telephone came the despairing shout: 'The gates of the Palace have been forced. The massacre has begun. . . . Hurry! The mob has reached the first floor. All is over. Goodbye. . . . They break in. They are. . . .' The last word of Konovalov from the Winter Palace was a broken cry.

Rushing out, we formed in some kind of an orderly line and in the darkness of the unlighted street we started, a few dim lanterns showing us our way. Never had Petrograd seen such a hopeless march. In absolute silence, like phantoms, we moved forward. Near Kazanskii Cathedral three loaded automobiles full of sailors, machine-guns and bombs, stopped us.

'Halt! Who goes there?'

'Representatives of the Municipality, the Soviets, the Council of the Republic, and the Socialist Parties.'

'Where are you going?'

'To the Winter Palace, to end this civil war and to save the defenders of the Palace.'

'Nobody can approach the Palace. Turn back at once or we fire on you.'

Nothing to do, we returned in ghastly silence to the Municipal Duma. There we made one more effort to communicate with the Palace, but the wires by this time had been cut. The firing had ceased and we knew that the massacre was probably in full swing.

Along pitch-black streets I staggered home, where I found my wife half-dead with anxiety for me. But I calmed her. 'My dear wife, we must now be prepared for whatever comes. The worst, in all human probability.'

John Reed, the foreign journalist, succeeded where Sorokin, the Russian politician, failed. Using his customary bluff, he penetrated into the Winter Palace not long before the siege, when it was being defended by student officer candidates and a women's

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

battalion, which remained loyal to Kerensky and the Provisional Government.

We went toward the Winter Palace by way of the Admiralteiskii. All the entrances to the Palace Square were closed by sentries, and a cordon of troops stretched clear across the western end, besieged by an uneasy throng of citizens. Except for far-away soldiers who seemed to be carrying wood out of the Palace courtyard and piling it in front of the main gateway, everything was quiet.

We couldn't make out whether the sentries were pro-Government or pro-Soviet. Our papers from Smolny had no effect, however, so we approached another part of the line with an important air and showed our American passports, saying 'Official business!' and shouldered through. At the door of the Palace the same old *shveitsari*, in their brass-buttoned blue uniforms with the red-and-gold collars, politely took our coats and hats, and we went upstairs. In the dark, gloomy corridor, stripped of its tapestries, a few old attendants were lounging about, and in front of Kerensky's door a young officer paced up and down, gnawing his moustache. We asked if we could interview the Minister-President. He bowed and clicked his heels.

'No, I am sorry,' he replied in French. 'Alexander Feodorovich is extremely occupied just now. . . .' He looked at us for a moment. 'In fact, he is not here. . . .'

'Where is he?'

'He has gone to the Front. And do you know, there wasn't enough gasoline for his automobile. We had to send to the English hospital and borrow some.' [See below on Kerensky's flight.]

'Are the Ministers here?'

'They are meeting in some room—I don't know where.'

'Are the Bolsheviki coming?'

'Of course. Certainly they are coming. I expect a telephone call every minute to say that they are coming. But we are ready. We have *yunkers* [*cadets*] in the front of the Palace. Through that door there.'

'Can we go in there?'

'Certainly not. It is not permitted.' Abruptly he shook hands all round and walked away. We turned to the forbidden door, set in a temporary partition dividing the hall and locked on the out-

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

side. On the other side were voices, and somebody laughing. Except for that the vast spaces of the old Palace were silent as the grave. An old *shveitsar* ran up. 'No, *barin*, you must not go in there.'

'Why is the door locked?'

'To keep the soldiers in,' he answered. After a few minutes he said something about having a glass of tea and went back up the hall. We unlocked the door.

Just inside a couple of soldiers stood on guard, but they said nothing. At the end of the corridor was a large, ornate room with gilded cornices and enormous crystal lustres, and beyond it several smaller ones, wainscoted with dark wood. On both sides of the parquettèd floor lay rows of dirty mattresses and blankets, upon which occasional soldiers were stretched out; everywhere was a litter of cigarette butts, bits of bread, cloth, and empty bottles with expensive French labels. More and more soldiers, with the red shoulder-straps of the *yunker*-schools, moved about in a stale atmosphere of tobacco smoke and unwashed humanity. One had a bottle of white burgundy, evidently filched from the cellars of the Palace. They looked at us with astonishment as we marched past, through room after room, until at last we came out into a series of great State salons, fronting their long and dirty windows on the Square. The walls were covered with huge canvases in massive gilt frames—historical battle-scenes . . . '12 October, 1812' and '6 November, 1812' and '16/28 August, 1813' . . . One had a gash across the upper right-hand corner.

The place was all a huge barrack, and evidently had been for weeks, from the look of the floor and walls. Machine-guns were mounted on window-sills, rifles stacked between the mattresses.

As we were looking at the pictures an alcoholic breath assailed me from the region of my left ear, and a voice said in thick but fluent French: 'I see, by the way you admire the paintings, that you are foreigners.' He was a short, puffy man with a baldish head as he removed his cap.

'Americans? Enchanted. I am Stabs-Capitan Vladimir Artizibashev, absolutely at your service.' It did not seem to occur to him that there was anything unusual in four strangers, one a woman, wandering through the defences of an army awaiting attack. He began to complain of the state of Russia.

'Not only these Bolsheviki,' he said, 'but the fine traditions of

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

the Russian Army are broken down. Look around you. These are all students in the officers' training schools. But are they gentlemen? Kerensky opened the officers' schools to the ranks, to any soldier who could pass an examination. Naturally there are many, many who are contaminated by the Revolution. . . .'

Without consequence he changed the subject. 'I am very anxious to go away from Russia. I have made up my mind to join the American Army. Will you please go to your Consul and make arrangements? I will give you my address.' In spite of our protestations he wrote it on a piece of paper, and seemed to feel better at once. I have it still. . . .

'We had a review this morning early,' he went on, as he guided us through the rooms and explained everything. 'The Women's Battalion decided to remain loyal to the Government.'

'Are the women soldiers in the Palace?'

'Yes, they are in the back rooms, where they won't be hurt if any trouble comes.' He sighed. 'It is a great responsibility,' said he.

For a while we stood at the window, looking down on the Square before the Palace, where three companies of long-coated *yunkers* were drawn up under arms, being harangued by a tall, energetic-looking officer I recognized as Stankevich, chief military commissar of the Provisional Government. After a few minutes two of the companies shouldered arms with a clash, barked three sharp shouts, and went swinging off across the Square, disappearing through the Red Arch into the quiet city.

'They are going to capture the Telephone Exchange,' said someone. Three cadets stood by us, and we fell into conversation. They said they had entered the schools from the ranks, and gave their names. . . . But now they didn't want to be officers any more, because officers were very unpopular. They didn't seem to know what to do, as a matter of fact, and it was plain that they were not happy.

But soon they began to boast. 'If the Bolsheviki come we shall show them how to fight. They do not dare to fight, they are cowards. But if we should be overpowered, well, every man keeps one bullet for himself. . . .'

At this point there was a burst of rifle-fire not far off. Out on the Square all the people began to run, falling flat on their faces, and the *izvoshchiki* [*horse-cab drivers*], standing on the corners,

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

galloped in every direction. Inside, all was uproar, soldiers running here and there, grabbing up guns, rifle-belts and shouting 'Here they come! Here they come!' . . . But in a few minutes it quieted down again. The *izvoshchiki* came back, the people lying down stood up. Through the Red Arch appeared the *yunkers*, marching a little out of step, one of them supported by two comrades.

A small group of Bolsheviks succeeded in breaking into the Palace but were arrested. Soon the tide of insurgents grew sufficiently strong to force another entrance. Sitting in paralysed indecision within the building, members of the Provisional Government waited for the end. Maliantovich, the Minister of Justice, describes the scene:

Suddenly a noise arose somewhere and began to grow, spread and roll ever nearer. And in its multitude of sounds, fused into a single powerful wave, we immediately sensed something special, unlike the previous noises—something final and decisive. It suddenly became clear that the end was coming. . . . The noise rose, swelled, and rapidly swept toward us in a broad wave. . . . And poured into our hearts unbearable anxiety, like a gust of poisoned air. . . . It was clear: this is the onslaught, we are being taken by storm. . . . Defence is useless—sacrifices will be in vain. . . . The door burst open. . . . A military cadet ran in, drew himself up, saluted, his face excited but resolute.

'What are the orders of the Provisional Government? Defence to the last man? We are ready to obey the orders of the Provisional Government.'

'No, it is not necessary! It is useless! The picture is clear! We want no bloodshed! We must surrender,' they all cried in concert, without discussing the question, merely looking at each other and finding the same feeling and decision in everyone's eyes.

Kishkin came forward. [*Kishkin was a personal friend of Kerensky and had been invited to join Kerensky's Coalition Cabinet.*] 'If they are here, it means that the Palace is already occupied.'

'It is occupied. All entrances are blocked. Everyone has surrendered. This is the only room still under guard. What are the orders of the Provisional Government?'

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

'Tell them that we want no bloodshed, that we yield to force, that we surrender,' said Kishkin.

There was a noise behind the door and it burst open. Like a splinter of wood thrown out by a wave, a little man flew into the room, pushed in by the onrushing crowd which poured in after him and, like water, at once spilled into every corner and filled the room. The little man wore a loose, open coat, a wide felt hat pushed back on his forehead, over his long, reddish hair, and glasses. He had a short, trimmed red moustache and a small beard. His short upper lip rose to his nose when he spoke. The eyes were colourless, the face tired. He flew in and cried in a sharp, small, insistent voice:

'Where are the members of the Provisional Government?'

'The Provisional Government is here,' said Konovalov, remaining seated. 'What do you wish?'

'I inform you, all of you, members of the Provisional Government, that you are under arrest. I am Antonov, chairman of the Military Revolutionary Committee.'

'The members of the Provisional Government yield to forces and surrender, in order to avoid bloodshed,' said Konovalov.

'To avoid bloodshed! And how much blood have you spilled?' shouted a voice from the mob behind the ring of guards. Many approving exclamations echoed from all sides.

Antonov stopped the outcries.

'Enough, comrades! That's all! We'll straighten that out afterwards. . . . Now we must draw up a protocol. I am going to write it now. I shall ask everyone. . . . But first I request you to surrender all arms in your possession.'

The military surrendered their arms, the rest declared that they carried none.

The room was jammed with soldiers, sailors, Red Guards, some carrying several weapons—a rifle, two revolvers, a sword, two machine-gun ribbons.

When it was learnt that Kerensky had fled, vile oaths were heard from the crowd. Some of the men shouted, inciting the rest to violence:

'These will run off too! . . . Kill them, finish them off, there's no need for protocols! . . .'

'Run them through, the sons of bitches! . . . Why waste time with them? They've drunk enough of our blood!' yelled a short

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

sailor, stamping the floor with his rifle—luckily without a bayonet—and looking around. It was almost a call to action. There were sympathetic replies:

‘What the devil, comrades! Stick them all on bayonets, make short work of them! . . .’

Antonov raised his head and shouted sharply:

‘Comrades, keep calm! All members of the Provisional Government are arrested. They will be imprisoned in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. I’ll permit no violence. Conduct yourselves calmly. Maintain order! Power is now in your hands. You must maintain order! . . .’

The members of the Provisional Government were then taken away to the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, on the other side of the Neva from the Winter Palace. It was the prison traditionally used for political prisoners. Maliantovich continues:

The mob was growing bolder. The guards increased their pace. . . . We walked faster and faster. . . . We reached the middle of the bridge. . . . Our speed no longer helped, it even seemed to provoke the mob. . . . Another moment and the guards would be overpowered and thrown aside. . . . And suddenly!

From somewhere machine-guns opened fire on us. The guards and the whole crowd flattened down on the bridge. We also threw ourselves down. There were cries: ‘Comrades! Comrades! Stop it! You’re firing on your own!’

Fire was opened from the fortress.

‘They’ve gone crazy—firing from the fortress!’ cried someone in our convoy.

This accident saved the lives of the arrested Ministers.

S. L. Maslov, Minister of Agriculture in the Provisional Government, describes what happened to him after the storming of the Winter Palace:

We were placed under arrest and told that we would be taken to Peter and Paul Fortress. We picked up our coats, but Kishkin’s was gone. Someone had stolen it. He was given a soldier’s coat. A discussion started between Antonov, the soldiers and the sailors as to whether the Ministers should be taken to their destination in automobiles or on foot. It was decided to make them walk.

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

Each of us was guarded by two men. As we walked through the Palace it seemed as if it were filled with the insurrectionists, some of whom were drunk. When we came out on the street we were surrounded by a mob, shouting, threatening . . . and demanding Kerensky. The mob seemed determined to take the law into its own hands and one of the Ministers was jostled a bit. Just then a shot was fired and the mob quieted down. We moved on by the Palace, past the Hermitage . . . to the Troitskii Bridge. At the Troitskii Bridge the mob recovered its voice and shouted, 'Throw them into the river!' The calls were becoming louder and louder. Just then a machine-gun opened fire from the other side of us. We threw ourselves down, while some of the mob ran, and with them one of the arrested officers. . . .

From this point to the fort we proceeded without further excitement. . . . Each of us was placed in a separate cell . . . which was cold and damp. In this manner I spent the night. In the morning I was given some hot water and a piece of bread, at noon some kind of a soup. It was only at nine in the evening that I got something to eat, two cutlets and some potatoes. Nothing happened during the day. I was given a catalogue of books and a piece of paper on which to write down things I needed for tomorrow. At three in the morning I was awakened by the entrance of several military men. They informed me that according to the decision of the Second Congress of Soviets Salazkin and I were placed under house arrest. They took me to the office; Salazkin was also there. . . . They asked me to promise on my word of honour not to leave the house. I declined and said that I was not obliged to make any promises to jail guards. Salazkin replied in the same manner. We were then informed that Red Guards would be placed in our home. When I explained that I was living in the building occupied by the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Soviet of Peasants' Deputies, they were a bit confused. . . . Another attempt was made to persuade me to make a promise, but I refused.

Following this conversation a member of the Revolutionary Committee and I got into a car and we went without any other guard to the building of the Executive Committee. As we entered . . . he said: 'You are free, but you should know that by refusing to give me your word of honour, you expose me to the danger of being placed under arrest.'

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The indefatigable John Reed seemed determined to be at the hub of the excitement on November 7th. For the second time he made his way into the Winter Palace with the city mob and the Red Guards.

We . . . swung down the wide Nevskii, three men standing up with rifles ready, peering at the windows. Behind us the street was alive with people running and stooping. We could no longer hear the cannon, and the nearer we drew to the Winter Palace end of the city the quieter and more deserted were the streets. The City Duma was all brilliantly lighted. Beyond that we made out a dark mass of people and a line of sailors, who yelled furiously at us to stop. The machine slowed down, and we climbed out.

It was an astonishing scene. Just at the corner of the Ekaterina Canal, under an arc-light, a cordon of armed sailors was drawn across the Nevskii, blocking the way to a crowd of people in column of fours. There were about three or four hundred of them, men in frock coats, well-dressed women, officers—all sorts and conditions of people. Among them we recognized many of the delegates from the Congress, leaders of the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries; . . . I caught sight of Malkin, reporter for the *Russian Daily News*. 'Going to die in the Winter Palace,' he shouted cheerfully. The procession stood still, but from the front of it came loud argument. Schreider and Prokopovich [the Mayor of Petrograd and the Minister of Supplies in the Provisional Government] were bellowing at the big sailor who seemed in command.

'We demand to pass!' they cried. 'See, these comrades come from the Congress of Soviets! Look at their tickets! We are going to the Winter Palace!'

The sailor was plainly puzzled. He scratched his head with an enormous hand, frowning. 'I have orders from the Committee not to let anybody go to the Winter Palace,' he grumbled. 'But I will send a comrade to telephone to Smolny. . . .'

'We insist upon passing! We are unarmed! We will march on whether you permit us or not!' cried old Schreider, very much excited.

'I have orders—' repeated the sailor sullenly.

'Shoot us if you want to! We will pass! Forward!' came from

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

all sides. 'We are ready to die, if you have the heart to fire on Russians and comrades! We bare our breasts to your guns!'

'No,' said the sailor, looking stubborn. 'I can't allow you to pass.'

'What will you do if we go forward? Will you shoot?'

'No, I'm not going to shoot people who haven't any guns. We won't shoot unarmed Russian people. . . .'

'We will go forward! What can you do?'

'We will do something,' replied the sailor, evidently at a loss. 'We can't let you pass. We will do something.'

'What will you do? What will you do?'

Another sailor came up, very much irritated. 'We will spank you!' he cried energetically. 'And if necessary we will shoot you too. Go home now, and leave us in peace!'

At this there was a great clamour of anger and resentment. Prokopovich had mounted some sort of box and, waving his umbrella, he made a speech:

'Comrades and citizens!' he said. 'Force is being used against us! We cannot have innocent blood upon the hands of these ignorant men! It is beneath our dignity to be shot down here in the street by switchmen.' (What he meant by 'switchmen' I never discovered.) 'Let us return to the Duma and discuss the best means of saving the country and the Revolution!'

Whereupon, in dignified silence, the procession marched around and back up the Nevskii, always in column of fours. And taking advantage of the diversion we slipped past the guards and set off in the direction of the Winter Palace.

Here it was absolutely dark, and nothing moved but pickets of soldiers and Red Guards grimly intent. In front of the Kazan' Cathedral a three-inch field-gun lay in the middle of the street, slewed sideways from the recoil of its last shot over the roofs. Soldiers were standing in every doorway talking in low tones and peering down toward the Police Bridge. I heard one voice saying: 'It is possible that we have done wrong. . . .' At the corners, patrols stopped all passers-by—and the composition of these patrols was interesting, for in command of the regular troops was invariably a Red Guard. . . . The shooting had ceased.

Just as we came to the Morskaia somebody was shouting: 'The yunkers have sent word they want us to go and get them out!' Voices began to give commands, and in the thick gloom we made

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

out a dark mass moving forward, silent but for the shuffle of feet and the clinking of arms. We fell in with the first ranks.

Like a black river, filling all the street, without song or cheer we poured through the Red Arch, where the man just ahead of me said in a low voice: 'Look out, comrades! Don't trust them. They will fire, surely!' In the open we began to run, stooping low and bunching together, and jammed up suddenly behind the pedestal of the Alexander Column.

'How many of you did they kill?' I asked.

'I don't know. About ten. . . .'

After a few minutes huddling there, some hundreds of men, the army seemed reassured and, without any orders, suddenly began again to flow forward. By this time, in the light that streamed out of all the Winter Palace windows, I could see that the first two or three hundred men were Red Guards, with only a few scattered soldiers. Over the barricade of firewood we clambered, and leaping down inside gave a triumphant shout as we stumbled on a heap of rifles thrown down by the *yunkers* who had stood there. On both sides of the main gateway the doors stood wide open, light streamed out, and from the huge pile came not the slightest sound.

Carried along by the eager wave of men we were swept into the right-hand entrance, opening into a great bare vaulted room, the cellar of the east wing, from which issued a maze of corridors and staircases. A number of huge packing cases stood about, and upon these the Red Guards and soldiers fell furiously, battering them open with the butts of their rifles, and pulling out carpets, curtains, linen, porcelain plates, glassware. . . . One man went strutting around with a bronze clock perched on his shoulder; another found a plume of ostrich feathers, which he stuck in his hat. The looting was just beginning when somebody cried, 'Comrades! Don't touch anything! Don't take anything! This is the property of the People!' Immediately twenty voices were crying, 'Stop! Put everything back! Don't take anything. Property of the People!' Many hands dragged the spoilers down. Damask and tapestry were snatched from the arms of those who had them; two men took away the bronze clock. Roughly and hastily the things were crammed back in their cases, and self-appointed sentinels stood guard. It was all utterly spontaneous. Through corridors and up staircases the cry could be heard growing fainter

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

and fainter in the distance, 'Revolutionary discipline ! Property of the People. . . .'

We crossed back over to the left entrance, in the west wing. There order was also being established. 'Clear the Palace !' bawled a Red Guard, sticking his head through an inner door. 'Come, comrades, let's show that we're not thieves and bandits. Everybody out of the Palace except the Commissars, until we get sentries posted.'

Two Red Guards, a soldier and an officer, stood with revolvers in their hands. Another soldier sat at a table behind them, with pen and paper. Shouts of 'All out ! All out !' were heard far and near within, and the army began to pour through the door, hustling, expostulating, arguing. As each man appeared he was seized by the self-appointed committee, who went through his pockets and looked under his coat. Everything that was plainly not his property was taken away, the man at the table noted it on his paper, and it was carried into a little room. The most amazing assortment of objects were thus confiscated; statuettes, bottles of ink, bedspreads worked with the Imperial monogram, candles, a small oil-painting, desk blotters, gold-handled swords, cakes of soap, clothes of every description, blankets. One Red Guard carried three rifles, two of which he had taken away from *yunkers*; another had four portfolios bulging with written documents. The culprits either sullenly surrendered or pleaded like children. All talking at once the committee explained that stealing was not worthy of the people's champions; often those who had been caught turned around and began to help go through the rest of the comrades.

Yunkers came out, in bunches of three or four. The committee seized upon them with an excess of zeal, accompanying the search with remarks like, 'Ah, Provocators ! Kornilovists ! Counter-revolutionists ! Murderers of the People !' But there was no violence done, although the *yunkers* were terrified. They too had their pockets full of small plunder. It was carefully noted down by the scribe, and piled in the little room. . . . The *yunkers* were disarmed. 'Now, will you take up arms against the People any more?' demanded clamouring voices.

'No,' answered the *yunkers*, one by one. Whereupon they were allowed to go free.

We asked if we might go inside. The committee was doubtful,

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

but the big Red Guard answered firmly that it was forbidden. 'Who are you anyway?' he asked. 'How do I know that you are not all Kerenskys?' (there were five of us, two women).

'Pazhal'st', *tovarishchi!* Way, Comrades!' A soldier and a Red Guard appeared in the door, waving the crowd aside, and other guards with fixed bayonets. After them followed single file half a dozen men in civilian dress—the members of the Provisional Government. First came Kishkin, his face drawn and pale, then Rutenberg, looking sullenly at the floor; Tereshchenko was next, glancing sharply around; he stared at us with cold fixity. . . . They passed in silence; the victorious insurrectionists crowded to see, but there were only a few angry mutterings. It was only later that we learned how the people in the street wanted to lynch them and shots were fired—but the sailors brought them safely to Peter-Paul [fortress]. . . .

In the meanwhile unrebuked we walked into the Palace. There was still a great deal of coming and going, of exploring new-found apartments in the vast edifice, of searching for hidden garrisons of *yunkers* which did not exist. We went upstairs and wandered through room after room. This part of the Palace had been entered also by other detachments from the side of the Neva. The paintings, statues, tapestries and rugs of the great State apartments were unharmed; in the offices, however, every desk and cabinet had been ransacked, the papers scattered over the floor, and in the living rooms beds had been stripped of their coverings and wardrobes wrenched open. The most highly prized loot was clothing, which the working people needed. In a room where furniture was stored we came upon two soldiers ripping the elaborate Spanish leather upholstery from chairs. They explained it was to make boots with. . . .

The old Palace servants in their blue and red and gold uniforms stood nervously about, from force of habit repeating, 'You can't go in there, *barin!* It is forbidden.' We penetrated at length to the gold and malachite chamber with crimson brocade hangings where the Ministers had been in session all that day and night, and where the *shveitzari* had betrayed them to the Red Guards. The long table covered with green baize was just as they had left it, under arrest. Before each empty seat was pen and ink and paper; the papers were scribbled over with beginnings of plans of action, rough drafts of proclamations and manifestos.

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

Most of these were scratched out, as their futility became evident, and the rest of the sheet covered with absent-minded geometrical designs, as the writers sat despondently listening while Minister after Minister proposed chimerical schemes. I took one of these scribbled pages, in the handwriting of Konovalov, which read, 'The Provisional Government appeals to all classes to support the Provisional Government——'

The biggest prize amongst the members of the Provisional Government slipped through the grasp of the Bolsheviks. Kerensky got out of Petrograd and joined up with troops on the side of the Provisional Government.

... I decided to break through the Bolshevik lines and personally meet the advancing troops approaching, as we believed, in the direction of Petrograd.

To do this it was necessary, first, to cross the entire city in full view of everybody, without arousing the attention of the Bolshevik troops and Red Guard patrols scattered throughout the capital. This was most difficult of all. After some consideration it was decided to stake all on one play. To remove all suspicion we determined to act openly.

I called for my open touring car. My soldier-chauffeur, with whom I had covered the entire front, was a brave and devoted man. One of my adjutants made clear to him the task we were embarking upon. Without a moment's hesitation he accepted it. As luck would have it, the supply of gasoline was not sufficient for the long journey, nor were there reserve tyres. We preferred to take the risk of running out of gasoline and of the absence of the reserve tyre to the possibility of attracting attention by prolonging the preparations. I took along with me Captain Kuzmin, assistant commander of the garrison, and a staff officer.

I do not know how it happened but the news of my proposed departure reached the Allied Embassies. Just as we were about to leave, representatives of the British, and, as far as I can remember, of the American Embassies, arrived saying that the Allied envoys desired that I be accompanied by an automobile flying the American flag. Although it was more than evident that the American flag could not save me and my companions in the event of our failure and that, on the contrary, it would only attract unnecessary attention on our passing through the

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

city, I accepted the suggestion as evidence of the interest of the Allies in the Russian Provisional Government and their solidarity with it.

. . . I went out into the yard of the staff building, together with my companions. We entered my car. Close at hand was the American machine. One of my officers, unable to find room in my car, decided to travel alone, but on the condition that in passing through the city he was to keep his machine, flying the American flag, at a 'respectful distance' from ours. Finally, we moved. We followed closely all the details of my daily travel through the city. I occupied my usual seat—on the right, in the rear. I wore my customary semi-military uniform, which had become so familiar to the population and to the troops. The automobile moved at the usual city speed. At the station, we passed the first Bolshevik guard. Some distance beyond, at the Astoria Hotel and at the Mariinskii Palace, were additional patrols and detachments of Bolsheviks. I need hardly say that the entire street—pedestrians and soldiers—recognized me immediately. The soldiers straightened up, as they would ordinarily have done. I saluted as usual. In all probability, the moment after I passed not one of them could account to himself how it was possible for him not only to have permitted this 'counter-revolutionist', this 'enemy of the people' to pass, but also to have saluted him.

Having passed safely through the centre of the city, on entering the workmen's section and approaching the Moscow Toll Gate we increased our pace and, finally, moved with breakneck speed. I remember how at the very exit from the city Red Guardsmen, patrolling the road, came rushing towards our machine from all sides of the *chaussée*, but we had already passed them, while they had not only failed to make an effort to stop us, but had not even had time to take a good look at us.

In the midst of all the excitement, the Second Congress of Soviets, with a Bolshevik majority this time, opened in Smolny. The rift between the left and right, which was to culminate in the abortive Constituent Assembly, was already clear. The tumult in the city and internal dissension in the meeting did not deter Lenin from embarking on his vast schemes for the administrative reorganization of the country. Philips Price, the English

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

journalist who was with the sailors at Kronstadt in June 1917, visited Smolny and watched the proceedings.

On the following morning, November 7th, I went again to the Smolny Institute, where the Petrograd Soviet was having a sitting to elect its delegates to the Second Soviet Congress which was to meet that afternoon. Trotsky was in the chair, and on the tribune stood the same short, bald-headed little man that I had seen six months before leading the tiny Bolshevik group in the First Soviet Congress. It was Lenin without his moustache, which he had shaved off in order to change his appearance during his period of forced concealment, now drawing to a close. The Petrograd Soviet was now one solid phalanx of Bolshevik Deputies, and roar after roar of applause swept the hall, as Lenin spoke of the coming of the Soviet Congress as the only organ which could carry through the Russian workers', soldiers' and peasants' revolutionary programme. Then someone at my side whispered that news had just come that the Military Revolutionary Committee, with the aid of the Red Guards from the factories and part of the garrison, had occupied the Winter Palace and arrested all the Ministers, with the exception of Kerensky, who had escaped in a motor-car. I repaired to the Bolshevik Party bureau on the lower floor. Here I found a sort of improvised revolutionary intelligence department, from which delegates were being despatched to all parts of the city with instructions, and whither they were returning with news and reports. Upstairs, in the bureau of the old Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary Executive, the silence of the grave reigned. A few girl typists were sorting papers, and the editor of the *Izvestiia*, Rosanov, was still trying to keep a steady countenance.

At three o'clock in the afternoon the great hall was full of delegates from all parts of the country, waiting for the opening of the Second Soviet Congress. The Bolshevik benches were crowded, and held fully 50 per cent of the Congress. A good second to them were the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, the coming peasants' party, which, though unrepresented in the lists for the National Assembly through technical hindrances, had by this time captured the bulk of the peasant Soviets of North Russia. Upon the platform mounted the members of the old Executive, which had been elected by the First Soviet Congress

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

in June, when the Mensheviks and Right Socialist Revolutionaries were as numerous as the Bolsheviks and their allies in the peasants' party were in this Congress. The Menshevik Dan was in the chair. 'We have met,' he began gravely, 'under the most peculiar circumstances. On the eve of the elections for the National Assembly the Government has been arrested by one of the parties in this Congress. As spokesman of the old Executive I declare this action to be unwarrantable. The Executive has done its duty by preparing in the last six months the ground for the democratic National Assembly. It now lays down its office and leaves the election of the new Presidium to the Second Soviet Congress.' The delegates thereupon voted, and the Bolshevik Sverdlov became chairman. A member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party now rose on a point of order. 'We are living in strange times,' he began. 'Three of our party comrades, members of the Government, are at this very moment besieged in the Winter Palace, where they are being bombarded by gunboats, manned by the supporters of the majority of this Congress. We demand their immediate release!' he roared, thumping his fist upon the table, while derisive shouts arose from the body of the hall. When he had finished, up rose Trotsky cool and ever ready with an answer. 'That sort of speech comes badly from a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party,' he began, 'for that party has shared joint responsibility for a Government, which has during the last four months kept under arrest a number of our party comrades, and has put to watch over the rest of us the members of the old Tsarist secret police!' General sensation and tumult throughout the hall! Meanwhile the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary delegates left the Congress in a body, accompanied by groans and hisses. When they had gone it was possible to see by the empty places that they represented about 20 per cent of the whole Congress. Such indeed had been the revolution in opinion since the First Congress.

Upon the platform now rose Lenin. His voice was weak, apparently with excitement, and he spoke with slight indecision. It seemed as he felt that the issue was still doubtful, and that it was difficult to put forward a programme right here and now. A Council of Peoples' Commissars was being set up, he said, and the list would be submitted to the Congress. The Council would propose to the Congress three resolutions, upon the basis of

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

which three decrees would be issued. The first was that steps should be taken to conclude an immediate armistice on the front, as a preliminary to peace negotiations. The invitation was to go out to the Allies and to the Central Powers, and the answers of each were to be awaited. The second decree would secure for the Land Committees of the peasant communes the right of temporary possession of the landlords' estates, pending the introduction of detailed legislation. The third decree would give the factory workers power of control over all operations of the employers and managers. 'We appeal to our comrades in England, France and Germany to follow our example and make peace with their fellow workers over the heads of their capitalist Governments,' concluded Lenin. 'We believe that the nation which gave Karl Marx to the world will not be deaf to our appeal. We believe that our words will be heard by the descendants of the Paris Communards, and that the British people will not forget their inheritance from the Chartists.'

Looking from the platform to the seated delegates, one could not help being struck with the fact that this was a young man's Congress. Whole rows of the benches were filled with sturdy, healthy young men from the Baltic Fleet and from the front. The skilled artisans of Moscow and Petrograd, dressed in their collarless black shirts and with fur caps on their heads, were also well to the fore. The peasant delegates were mostly young soldiers, who had gone to their villages and had taken the lead in the local communes. There were also a number of intellectual faces, mostly of young men who had during the autumn helped to form the new Left Socialist Revolutionary Party in the villages. Conspicuous by their absence were the middle-aged intellectuals, the old type of peasant with long beard, and the old Socialist Party leader, who had known thirty years of struggle and many prison sentences. Another point of interest was that this Congress showed a preponderance of delegates from the northern and central provinces, the very districts, in fact, where the largest number of poor half-proletarian peasants were found, where the skilled artisans dominated the towns and the land-hungry soldier deserters dominated the villages. There were relatively fewer delegates from the fertile south-east, from Siberia, and practically none from the Cossack territories. There were also no delegates from the Ukraine, because the Ukrainian

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

peasants and soldiers were at this time gathering round their National Rada or Council at Kiev. This Second All-Russian Soviet Congress, therefore, marked the revolt of the workmen and poor peasants of North and Central Russia, with the passive consent of the more prosperous regions of the country whose populations had not yet felt the pangs of hunger, but were simply war-weary.

Reed's account of the same scene is somewhat more dramatic:

But suddenly a new sound made itself heard, deeper than the tumult of the crowd, persistent, disquieting—the dull shock of guns. People looked anxiously toward the clouded windows, and a sort of fever came over them. Martov, demanding the floor, croaked hoarsely, ‘The civil war is beginning, comrades! The first question must be a peaceful settlement of the crisis. On principle and from a political standpoint we must urgently discuss a means of averting civil war. Our brothers are being shot down in the streets! At this moment, when before the opening of the Congress of Soviets the question of Power is being settled by means of a military plot organized by one of the revolutionary parties —’ [*i.e. the Bolsheviki*]. For a moment he could not make himself heard above the noise. ‘All of the revolutionary parties must face the fact! The first *vopros* (question) before the Congress is the question of Power, and this question is already being settled by force of arms in the streets. . . . We must create a power which will be recognized by the whole democracy. If the Congress wishes to be the voice of the revolutionary democracy it must not sit with folded hands before the developing civil war, the result of which may be a dangerous outburst of counter-revolution. . . . The possibility of a peaceful outcome lies in the formation of a united democratic authority. . . . We must elect a delegation to negotiate with the other Socialist parties and organizations. . . .’

Always the methodical boom of cannon through the windows, and the delegates screaming at each other.

. . . So, with the crash of artillery, in the dark, with hatred, and fear, and reckless daring, new Russia was being born.

The Left Socialist Revolutionaries and the United Social Democrats supported Martov's proposition. It was accepted. A soldier

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

announced that the All-Russian Peasants' Soviets had refused to send delegates to the Congress; he proposed that a committee be sent with a formal invitation. 'Some delegates are present,' he said, 'I move that they be given votes.' Accepted.

Kharash, wearing the epaulettes of a captain, passionately demanded the floor. 'The political hypocrites who control this Congress,' he shouted, 'told us we were to settle the question of Power—and it is being settled behind our backs, before the Congress opens! Blows are being struck against the Winter Palace, and it is by such blows that the nails are being driven into the coffin of the political party which has risked such an adventure!' Uproar.

On the night of the fall of the Provisional Government, the Ministry of War wired the following message to the General Staff [Stavka] at Mogilev:

Stavka: Can you give us a statement of the situation in Petrograd at the present moment?

Ministry of War: The situation is as follows: the Nevskii Prospect down to the Moika is open for traffic, but from the Moika to the Winter Palace it is occupied by soldiers and sailors . . . who are gradually closing in on the palace from the right and the left. All other streets are open. . . . The railway stations are occupied by the insurrectionists, and their pickets patrol the streets, detaining everyone who has not the proper credentials. Around the Smolny Institute, where the staff of the insurgents is located, armoured cars . . . are on guard. Generally the streets are quiet; the day passed without any encounter, and the crowds . . . are amazingly indifferent to what is going on. In the City Duma a 'Committee to Save the Revolution' is in session. It consists of representatives of the Duma, and of that part of the Central Committee of the Soviets which left the Smolny Institute, after having broken with the Bolsheviks. The insurrectionists maintain order in the city; there have been no disorders or pogroms of any kind. . . .

The plan of the insurrection was undoubtedly worked out beforehand and is being executed with great precision and resoluteness. The Committee to Save the Revolution has at present no forces to rely upon, but puts its hopes on the troops coming from the front. . . .

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

In the beginning the insurrectionists showed no determination, and only later, when they saw there was no resistance . . . [*the sentence was not finished*].

Stavka: Where are the members of the Provisional Government now?

Ministry of War: They were in the Winter Palace an hour ago and are now under arrest. . . .

On November 8th, Sir George Buchanan, the British Ambassador, took a walk through the city. He noticed the effects of the looting that Reed had seen on the previous day:

I walked out this afternoon to see the damage that had been done to the Winter Palace by the prolonged bombardment of the previous evening, and to my surprise found that, in spite of the near range, there were on the river side but three marks where the shrapnel had struck. On the town side the walls were riddled with thousands of bullets from machine guns, but not one shot from a field gun that had been fired from the opposite side of the Palace Square had struck the building. In the interior very considerable damage was done by the soldiers and workmen, who looted or smashed whatever they could lay hands on.

In the evening two officer instructors of the women's battalion came to my wife and beseeched her to try and save the women defenders of the Winter Palace, who, after they had surrendered, had been sent to one of the barracks where they were being most brutally treated by the soldiers. General Knox [*the British military attaché*] at once drove to the Bolshevik headquarters at the Smolny Institute. His demands for their immediate release were at first refused on the ground that they had resisted desperately, fighting to the last with bombs and revolvers. Thanks, however, to his firmness and persistency, the order for their release was eventually signed, and the women were saved from the fate that would inevitably have befallen them had they spent the night in the barracks.

The Socialist Revolutionary Sorokin also sallied forth on the 8th to continue work on his newspaper, the *Delo Naroda*.

Next day I went out to meet my unhappy associates. The aspect

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

of things was horrible. At the corner of Zhamenskii and Basseinii Streets I came up on a crowd of soldiers plundering a wine-shop. Already brutally drunk, they yelled: 'Long life to the Bolsheviks and death to the capitalistic government.' In other places similar scenes. Huge crowds of soldiers, sailors and workmen plundered the cellars of the Winter Palace. Broken bottles littered the square, cries, shrieks, groans, obscenities, filled the clean morning. Many of those who entered the cellars could not get out owing to the press of those who madly pushed forward to get in. The cellars swam in wine from broken casks and bottles and many men were actually drowned in the flood of it.

The besieged Ministers had not been murdered but had been rushed off to the Peter and Paul Fortress to join the Ministers of the Tsar. But the fate of the women was even worse than our imaginations had been able to picture. Many had been killed, and those who escaped death had been savagely ravished by the Bolsheviks. Some of these women soldiers were so vilely abused that they died in frightful agony [*this appears to have been an exaggeration*]. Some of the officials of the Provisional Government were also murdered with sadistic cruelty.

Oh Liberty, what crimes, what unspeakable crimes. In thy name!

The news from Kerensky was indefinite. The Central Committees of the Social Revolutionary and the Social Democratic Parties met, and some effort was made towards organizing a force of cadets from the military schools.

In the office of my newspaper I wrote my first article on the conquerors, hailing them as murderers, ravishers, brigands and robbers. I signed this article with my full name, in spite of the protests of my colleagues and even the compositors. 'Let it stand,' I said. 'We all face death anyhow.' As a matter of fact my article had such a success that we had to print three times the usual number of papers. But while my friends lauded it, the mobs in the streets and even in private houses grew larger and more lawless. Murders, assaults, looting, especially of wine shops, increased. Passion for drink grew so great that the crowd risked even death to effect the immediate 'nationalization' of the dram shops. In desperation citizens prepared to defend their homes. In the evening an armed band broke into our newspaper office to arrest all the editors. Fortunately, there was present only Lebedev, for-

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

merly Minister of the Navy in Kerensky's Cabinet, and he managed to escape through a back door. My friends begged me not to spend the night at my home, and I decided to follow their advice. I consented also to change my appearance by ceasing to shave. Many are doing the same, clean-shaven men appearing with beards, bearded men shaving.

Next day brought no news of Kerensky, but we heard of a fight near Gatchina, and of the massacre of all the cadets in Petrograd military schools. These young heroes fought like lions and died at last like true patriots. Everything is closed, schools, banks, offices. Hunger is everywhere increasing.

At the Smolny Institute on the 8th, Lenin was calmly pushing ahead with formation of a Bolshevik Government. People's Commissars for the most important ministerial functions were appointed: all of them were Bolsheviks. Lenin proposed immediate peace negotiations to all the belligerent powers, and the decree nationalizing the land was put through. Reed relates:

It was just 8.40 p.m. when a thundering wave of cheers announced the entrance of the presidium, with Lenin—great Lenin—among them. A short, stocky figure, with a big head set down in his shoulders, bald and bulging. Little eyes, a snubbish nose, wide, generous mouth and heavy chin; clean-shaven now, but already beginning to bristle with the well-known beard of his past and future. Dressed in shabby clothes, his trousers much too long for him. Unimpressive, to be the idol of a mob, loved and revered as perhaps few leaders in history have been. A strange popular leader—a leader purely by virtue of intellect; colourless, humourless, uncompromising and detached, without picturesque idiosyncrasies—but with the power of explaining profound ideas in simple terms, of analysing a concrete situation. And combined with shrewdness, the greatest intellectual audacity. . . .

. . . Now Lenin, gripping the edge of the reading stand, letting his little winking eyes travel over the crowd as he stood there waiting, apparently oblivious to the long-rolling ovation, which lasted several minutes. When it finished, he said simply, 'We shall now proceed to construct the Socialist order!' Again that overwhelming human roar.

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

‘The first thing is the adoption of practical measures to realize peace. . . . We shall offer peace to the peoples of all the belligerent countries upon the basis of the Soviet terms—no annexations, no indemnities, and the right of self-determination of peoples. At the same time, according to our promise, we shall publish and repudiate the secret treaties. . . . The question of War and Peace is so clear that I think that I may, without preamble, read the project of a Proclamation to the Peoples of All the Belligerent Countries. . . .’

His great mouth, seeming to smile, opened wide as he spoke; his voice was hoarse—not unpleasantly so, but as if it had hardened that way after years and years of speaking—and went on monotonously, with the effect of being able to go on forever. . . . For emphasis he bent forward slightly. No gestures. And before him, a thousand simple faces looking up in intent adoration.

[*Lenin then read the Proclamation.*]

. . . ‘The Revolution of November 6th and 7th,’ he ended, ‘has opened the era of the Social Revolution. . . . The labour movement, in the name of peace and Socialism, shall win, and fulfil its destiny. . . .’

There was something quiet and powerful in all this, which stirred the souls of men. It was understandable why people believed when Lenin spoke. . . .

. . . It was exactly 10.35 when Kamenev asked all in favour of the Proclamation to hold up their cards. One delegate dared to raise his hand against, but the sudden sharp outburst around him brought it swiftly down. . . . Unanimous.

Suddenly, by common impulse, we found ourselves on our feet, mumbling together into the smooth lifting unison of the *Internationale*. A grizzled old soldier was sobbing like a child. Alexandra Kollontai rapidly winked the tears back. The immense sound rolled through the hall, burst windows and doors and seared into the quiet sky. ‘The war is ended! The war is ended!’ said a young workman near me, his face shining. And when it was over, as we stood there in a kind of awkward hush, someone in the back of the room shouted, ‘Comrades! Let us remember those who have died for liberty!’ So we began to sing the Funeral March, that slow, melancholy and yet triumphant chant, so

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Russian and so moving. The *Internationale* is an alien air, after all. The Funeral March seemed the very soul of those dark masses whose delegates sat in this hall, building from their obscure visions a new Russia—and perhaps more. . . .

For this did they lie there, the martyrs of March, in their cold Brotherhood Grave on Mars Field; for this thousands and tens of thousands had died in the prisons, in exile, in Siberian mines. It had not come as they expected it would come, nor as the *intelligentsia* desired it; but it had come—rough, strong, impatient of formulas, contemptuous of sentimentalism; *real*. . . .

Lenin was reading the Decree on Land. . . .

At two o'clock the Land Decree was put to vote, with only one against and the peasant delegates wild with joy. . . . So plunged the Bolsheviki ahead, irresistible, overriding hesitation and the opposition—the only people in Russia who had a definite programme of action while the others talked for eight long months. . . .

It was almost seven when we woke the sleeping conductors and motor-men of the street-cars which the Street Railway Workers' Union always kept waiting at Smolny to take the Soviet delegates to their homes. In the crowded car there was less happy hilarity than the night before, I thought. Many looked anxious; perhaps they were saying to themselves, 'Now we are masters, how can we do our will?'

To the English journalist, Philips Price, the Bolshevik coup seemed as ephemeral as the numerous government changes that had preceded it throughout 1917. A mood of scepticism affected the man in the street also for the first few days after the uprising, but soon it became apparent that the Bolsheviks were made of different mettle to the weak coalitions which had preceded them:

By November 9th it was clear that power in Petrograd was actually in the hands of the Military Revolutionary Committee, acting in the name of the Second All-Russian Soviet Congress. This all seemed to me at the time very ridiculous, and I wanted to laugh at what had happened in the previous three days. I was still unaccustomed to the atmosphere of Revolution. I tried to imagine a committee of common soldiers and workmen setting themselves up in London and declaring that they were the Government, and that no order from Whitehall was to be obeyed

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

unless it was countersigned by them. I tried to imagine the British Cabinet entering into negotiations with the Committee for the settlement of the dispute, while Buckingham Palace was surrounded by troops and the Sovereign escaped from a side entrance disguised as a washerwoman. And yet something of this sort in Russian surroundings had actually happened. It was almost impossible to realize that the century-old Russian Empire was actually dissolving before one's eyes with such extraordinary lack of dignity.

I went down to the Nevskii Prospect on the morning of the 9th. The middle-class press was being sold in the streets, as if nothing had happened. Its tone, however, was muddled. The *Cadet Rech'* appeared too staggered by the shock to be able to do more than moan about the fate of Russia. At the Chief Telegraph Office I met a man who was connected with banking circles. He, too, was so stunned that he was finding relief by persuading himself that, although the Bolsheviks had temporarily succeeded, they could not possibly hold power for more than a few days. In the Petrograd Telegraph Agency, however, I found a more confident atmosphere. All the old officials were at work as if nothing had happened. I was shown telegrams received from what purported to be soldiers' committees at the front. They promised every assistance in the task of expelling the 'traitors and usurpers'. Couriers were running backwards and forwards to the offices of the Cadet newspapers; leaflets and special anti-Bolshevik bulletins were being printed and distributed broadcast. It was clear that a part at least of the bureaucracy, with the intelligentsia at its head, were already mobilizing against those who had taken power.

Perhaps, after all, I thought to myself, the whole thing was a mad adventure. How could committees of workmen and soldiers, even if they had the passive consent of the war weary and hungry masses, succeed against the whole of the technical apparatus of the bureaucracy and of the agents of foreign finance? Splendid as was this rebellion of the slaves, as showing that there was still hope and courage in the masses, it was surely doomed in the face of these tremendous odds. Russia could hardly escape the fate of Carthage. She would become the hewer of wood and drawer of water for the finance magnates of the modern Russia and Western Europe. And this view I found expressed even in

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

quarters standing quite near to the Bolsheviks. In the Sadovaia Street I met an acquaintance who was working with Maxim Gorky on his newspaper, the *Novaia Zhizn'*. 'The Bolsheviks have made a great mistake in seizing power by these methods,' he said; 'they cannot possibly hold it unless the moderate democratic parties come to their aid.' This view of a Russian progressive intellectual was very similar to those of outside observers at this time. 'During the weekend,' I wrote in a despatch to the *Manchester Guardian* that evening, 'it has been possible to observe that the right wing of the Bolsheviks are dissatisfied with the demagogic tactics of Lenin and Trotsky, who control the new Council of the People's Commissioners. The only solution giving any hope of success would be that the moderate peasant parties should send representatives into the Revolutionary Government, and thereby exercise a sobering influence. Within the ranks of the Bolsheviks are differences. The moderate wing is inclined to the formation of a Coalition Socialist Ministry. But Lenin and Trotsky seem intent on turning themselves into cheap editions of Robespierre.'

On the following day, however (November 10th), there was a different feeling in the air. It seemed as if there was, for the first time for many months, a political force in the country that knew what it wanted. This view was clearly reflected in the common talk in the streets. Outside the Circus Modern a large crowd had assembled for a meeting, at which delegates from the Soviet Congress were going to speak. Groups of lower middle-class citizens, the poorer type of student and small shopkeeper and all that urban element which in Russia goes under the name of *meshchanin* were discussing the outlook. No word was said about the violent methods by which the Bolsheviks had come into power. The deeds which shocked the tender feelings of the intellectual did not trouble the realist politician in the street. Would they be able to bring food to the towns and make an end to the war? That was the question that was being asked. The Tsar's Government could not do it, nor could Kerensky's. 'Give these people a chance,' were the words that I heard coming from all sides. The small shopkeeper-class and a large part of the high-collared proletariat, which had been bitterly hostile to the Bolsheviks all through the summer, were apparently converted for the moment to an attitude of benevolent neutrality.

THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION

The Revolution came and went, but it only involved a minute proportion of Russia's 170 millions, at least for the time being. Gorky notes in his Fragments From My Diary:

March 1917 [Petrograd]

Motor-cars, splashing mud against the walls and smothering passers-by, tear rumbling and hooting down the street. They are crowded to overflowing with soldiers and sailors, and bristle with the steel quills of bayonets, like huge hedgehogs running amok. Every now and then there is the crack of a rifle. Revolution! The Russian nation is scurrying about, bewildered with its newly-acquired freedom; it is trying to grasp it, but it finds it somewhat elusive.

In the Alexander Park a gardener is engrossed in his solitary work; a thick-set man in his fifties. Clumsily and quietly he sweeps away last year's fallen leaves and the litter from paths and flower beds, and brushes off the freshly-fallen snow. He takes not the slightest interest in the bustle that is going on around him, and remains deaf to the screeching of klaxons, the shouts and songs and shots. He does not even see the red flags. I watched him to see if he would look up presently and notice the people running about, the motor-lorries glittering with bayonets. But he bent down over his works and went on with it as stubbornly as a mole. Apparently he is as blind as one too.

July 19, 1917

Soldiers in steel helmets, just recalled from the front, are surrounding the Peter and Paul fortress. They are marching leisurely along the pavements and through the park, dragging their machine-guns behind them, their rifles carelessly dangling from their shoulders. Occasionally one of them calls out good-naturedly to a passer-by:

'Hurry up; there's going to be some shooting!'

The inhabitants are all agog to see the battle and are following the soldiers silently, with fox-like movements, dodging from tree to tree and straining their necks, looking eagerly ahead.

In the Alexander Park flowers are growing at the sides of the paths; the gardener is busying himself among them. He has a clean apron on and carries a spade in his hand. As he walks along he scolds both onlookers and soldiers as though they were a flock of sheep.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

‘Where are you walking, there? Is that grass made for you to trample on? Isn’t there enough room for you on the path?’

A bearded, iron-headed peasant in soldier’s uniform, his rifle under his arm, says to the gardener:

‘You look out yourself, old boy, or we’ll shoot you straight away.’

‘Oh, will you? You just try! Fine shot, you are. . . .’

‘Don’t you know there’s a war on? There’s going to be some fighting.’

‘Oh, is there? Well, get on with your fighting, and I’ll get on with my job.’ Then, taking a pair of clippers from his pocket, he grumbled: ‘Trampling about where you’re not allowed to. . . .’

‘It’s war.’

‘What’s that got to do with me? Fighting’s all very well for them that likes it, and you’ve got plenty of others to help you; but I’m all alone in this job. You’d better clean than rifle of yours a bit; it’s all rusty. . . .’

There is a whistle, and the soldier, unable to light the cigarette in his lips, puts it hastily in his pocket and runs off between the trees.

The gardener spits after him in disgust and shouts angrily:

‘What the devil are you running over the grass for? Isn’t there any other road you can go by?’

Autumn 1917

The gardener walks leisurely along the path, a ladder on his shoulder and a pair of shears in his hand. Every now and then he stops to cut off the dead branches by the side of the path. He has grown thinner—seems almost shrivelled; his clothes hang on him like a sail on a mast on a windless day. The shears snip angrily and creakily as he cuts down the barren wood.

Watching him, I could not help thinking that neither an earthquake nor a flood would prevent him from going on with his work. And if the trumpets of the archangels announcing the day of judgment were not shining brilliantly enough, I am quite certain that he would scold the archangels in precisely the same voice as he scolded the soldier.

‘You’d better clean those trumpets of yours a bit, they’re all dirty. . . .’

CHAPTER VI

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

In Petrograd the Bolsheviks were triumphant, but their troubles in the rest of the country had only just begun. After his escape Kerensky succeeded in gathering round him a small band of Cossacks. On November 9th he advanced at the head of his troops towards Petrograd, with Tsarskoe Selo as his first objective.

John Reed, at the centre of events as always, went to Tsarskoe Selo at this time. Near the height of the crisis, he came upon two Russians involved in a heated argument as to the merits of the new Bolshevik Government.

We sallied out into the town. Just at the door of the station stood two soldiers with rifles and bayonets fixed. They were surrounded by about a hundred business men, Government officials and students, who attacked them with passionate argument and epithet. The soldiers were uncomfortable and hurt, like children unjustly scolded.

A tall young man with a supercilious expression, dressed in the uniform of a student, was leading the attack.

‘You realize, I presume,’ he said insolently, ‘that by taking up arms against your brothers you are making yourselves the tools of murderers and traitors?’

‘Now brother,’ answered the soldier earnestly, ‘you don’t understand. There are two classes, don’t you see, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. We —’

‘Oh, I know that silly talk!’ broke in the student rudely. ‘A bunch of ignorant peasants like you hear somebody bawling a few catch-words. You don’t understand what they mean. You just echo them like a lot of parrots.’ The crowd laughed. ‘I’m a Marxian student. And I tell you that this isn’t Socialism you are fighting for. It’s just plain pro-German anarchy!’

‘Oh, yes, I know,’ answered the soldier, with sweat dripping from his brow. ‘You are an educated man, that is easy to see, and I am only a simple man. But it seems to me——’

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

'I suppose,' interrupted the other contemptuously, 'that you believe Lenin is a real friend of the proletariat?'

'Yes, I do,' answered the soldier, suffering.

'Well my friend, do you know that Lenin was sent through Germany in a closed car? Do you know that Lenin took money from the Germans?'

'Well, I don't know much about that,' answered the soldier stubbornly, 'but it seems to me that what he says is what I want to hear, and all the simple men like me. Now there are two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat——'

'You are a fool! Why, my friend, I spent two years in Schlüsselburg for revolutionary activity, when you were still shooting down revolutionists and singing 'God Save the Tsar!' My name is Vasilii Keorgevich Panyin. Didn't you ever hear of me?'

'I'm sorry to say I never did,' answered the soldier with humility. 'But then, I am not an educated man. You are probably a great hero.'

'I am,' said the student with conviction. 'And I am opposed to the Bolsheviki, who are destroying our Russia, our free Revolution. Now how do you account for that?'

The soldier scratched his head. 'I can't account for it at all,' he said, grimacing with the pain of his intellectual processes. 'To me it seems perfectly simple—but then I'm not well educated. It seems like there are only two classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie——'

'There you go again with your silly formula!' cried the student.

'——only two classes,' went on the soldier, doggedly. 'And whoever isn't on one side is on the other. . . .'

In the middle of a personal excursion round the Royal Palaces at Tsarskoe Selo, Reed inadvertently slipped under the net of the non-Bolshevik camp, but thanks to his usual luck and the old world courtesy of some Tsarist officers he disentangled himself successfully:

We went on through the arch of the huge Ekaterina Palace, into the Palace enclosure itself, asking for headquarters. A sentry outside a door in a curving white wing of the Palace said that the commandant was inside.

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

In a graceful, white, Georgian room, divided into unequal parts by a two-sided fireplace, a group of officers stood anxiously talking. They were pale and distracted, and evidently hadn't slept. To one, an oldish man with a white beard, his uniform studded with decorations, who was pointed out as the Colonel, we showed our Bolshevik papers.

He seemed surprised. 'How did you get here without being killed?' he asked politely. 'It is very dangerous in the streets just now. Political passion is running very high in Tsarskoe Selo. There was a battle this morning, and there will be another tomorrow morning. Kerensky is to enter the town at eight o'clock.'

'Where are the Cossacks?'

'About a mile over that way.' He waved his arm.

'And you will defend the city against them?'

'Oh dear no.' He smiled. 'We are holding the city for Kerensky.' Our hearts sank, for our passes stated that we were revolutionary to the core. The Colonel cleared his throat. 'About those passes of yours,' he went on. 'Your lives will be in danger if you are captured. Therefore, if you want to see the battle, I will give you an order for rooms in the officers' hotel, and if you will come back here at seven o'clock in the morning, I will give you new passes.'

'So you are for Kerensky?' we said.

'Well, not exactly for Kerensky.' The Colonel hesitated. 'You see, most of the soldiers in the garrison are Bolsheviks, and today, after the battle, they all went away in the direction of Petrograd, taking the artillery with them. You might say that none of the soldiers are for Kerensky; but some of them just don't want to fight at all. The officers have almost all gone over to Kerensky's forces, or simply gone away. We—ahem—in a most difficult position, as you see. . . .'

We did not believe that there would be any battle.

. . . The Colonel courteously sent his orderly to escort us to the railroad station. He was from the south, born of French immigrant parents in Bessarabia. 'Ah,' he kept saying, 'it is not the danger or the hardships I mind, but being so long, three years, away from my mother. . . .'

Looking out of the window of the train as we sped through the cold dark toward Petrograd, I caught glimpses of clumps of soldiers gesticulating in the light of fires, and of clusters of

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

armoured cars halted together at crossroads, the chauffeurs hanging out of the turrets and shouting to each other. . . .

All the troubled night over the bleak flats leaderless bands of soldiers and Red Guards wandered, clashing and confused, and the Commissars of the Military Revolutionary Committee hurried from one group to another, trying to organize a defence. . . .

Kerensky's picaresque campaign soon crumbled in the face of Bolshevik propaganda amongst his troops, combined with some actual skirmishes in the region of Tsarskoe Selo. The Bolshevik commander, Colonel Muravev, stressed the military aspect in the report he put out:

To all Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies:

The 12th of November, in a bloody combat near Tsarskoe Selo, the revolutionary arm defeated the counter-revolutionary troops of Kerensky and Kornilov. In the name of the Revolutionary Government I order all regiments to take the offensive against the enemies of the revolutionary democracy, and to take all measures to arrest Kerensky. . . .

After the Bolshevik victory, Reed returned once more to Tsarskoe Selo, where he met Dybenko, the sailor-president of the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet, who has already been mentioned in these pages. Reed also ran into the same two officers who had been so courteous to him on his earlier visit to Tsarskoe:

And so we came into Tsarskoe, all bustling with the swaggering heroes of the proletarian horde. Now the palace where the Soviet had met was a busy place. Red Guards and sailors filled the courtyard, sentries stood at the doors, and a stream of couriers and Commissars pushed in and out. In the Soviet room a samovar had been set up, and fifty or more workers, soldiers, sailors and officers stood around, drinking tea and talking at the top of their voices. In one corner two clumsy-handed working men were trying to make a multigraphing machine go. At the centre table, the huge Dybenko bent over a map, marking out positions for the troops with red and blue pencils. In his free hand he carried, as always, the enormous blue-steel revolver. Anon he sat himself down at a typewriter and pounded away with one finger; every

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

little while he would pause, pick up the revolver, and lovingly spin the chamber.

A couch lay along the wall, and on this was stretched a young workman. Two Red Guards were bending over him, but the rest of the company did not pay any attention. In his breast was a hole; through his clothes fresh blood came welling up with every heart-beat. His eyes were closed, and his young, bearded face was greenish-white. Faintly and slowly he still breathed, with every breath sighing, '*Mir budit! Mir budit!* (Peace is coming! Peace is coming!).'

Dybenko looked up as we came in. 'Ah,' he said to Baklanov. 'Comrade, will you go up to the Commandant's headquarters and take charge? Wait; I will write you credentials.' He went to the typewriter and slowly picked out the letters.

The new Commandant of Tsarskoe Selo and I went toward the Ekaterina Palace, Baklanov very excited and important. In the same ornate, white room some Red Guards were rummaging curiously around, while my old friend, the Colonel, stood by the window biting his moustache. He greeted me like a long-lost brother. At a table near the door sat the French Bessarabian. The Bolsheviki had ordered him to remain, and continue his work.

'What could I do?' he muttered. 'People like myself cannot fight on either side in such a war as this, no matter how much we instinctively dislike the dictatorship of the mob. . . I only regret that I am so far from my mother in Bessarabia!'

Baklanov was formally taking over the office from the Commandant. 'Here,' said the Colonel nervously, 'are the keys to the desk.'

A Red Guard interrupted. 'Where's the money?' he asked rudely. The Colonel seemed surprised. 'Money? Money? Ah, you mean the chest. There it is,' said the Colonel, 'just as I found it when I took possession three days ago. Keys,' the Colonel shrugged. 'I have no keys.'

The Red Guard sneered knowingly. 'Very convenient,' he said.

'Let us open the chest,' said Baklanov. 'Bring an axe. Here is an American comrade. Let him smash the chest open, and write down what he finds there.'

I swung the axe. The wooden chest was empty.

'Let's arrest him,' said the Red Guard, venomously. 'He is'

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Kerensky's man. He has stolen the money and given it to Kerensky.'

Baklanov did not want to. 'Oh, no,' he said. '... He is not to blame.'

'The devil!' cried the Red Guard. 'He is Kerensky's man, I tell you. If you won't arrest him, then we will, and we'll take him to Petrograd and put him in Peter-Paul, where he belongs!' At this the other Red Guards growled assent. With a piteous glance at us the Colonel was led away.

By November 14th Kerensky and his small band of Cossacks were surrounded and almost totally defeated. Even these Cossacks, who had remained with Kerensky until the end, were not above intriguing against him and submitting to Bolshevik propaganda, for Kerensky suddenly found to his horror that they had made a pact with Dybenko to hand him over to the Bolsheviks in return for their own safety. Almost miraculously, Kerensky managed to stage an escape from Gatchina, to where he had retreated westward from Tsarskoe Selo. He subsequently escaped from Russia. He left the political scene as melodramatically as he had animated it at the peak of his brief career as head of the State.

But there was no way of escape. I had prepared no measures for my personal safety. Nor were any preparations made for departure from Gatchina. We were too few for any armed resistance—less than ten. Escape from the palace was likewise impossible. Built by Paul I in the form of a closed rectangle, the palace grounds had but one exit, already occupied by a mixed guard of Cossacks and sailors.

While we were discussing how to escape from the *impasse*, how to get out from the trap, one of the keepers of the palace appeared offering assistance. He explained that he knew of a secret underground exit, leading outside of the palace, but that it was impossible to make use of this exit before dark. If nothing happened before then, it was possible to escape from the trap by means of this secret exit. I requested my companions to lose no time and save themselves one by one as best they could.

I, personally, and Lieutenant Vinner determined not to give ourselves up to the traitors alive. That was all. Our plan was that, while the band of sailors and Cossacks would search for us

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

in the front rooms, we would settle accounts with life by means of our revolvers in the rear chambers. At that time, on the morning of November 14, 1917, this resolve seemed quite simple, logical and inevitable.

Time passed. We waited. Downstairs they were bargaining. Suddenly, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the same soldier who had brought us, in the morning, the news of Dybenko's arrival, came running in. His face was pale as death. The bargain had been concluded, he explained. The Cossacks had bought their freedom and the right to return to their homes with their arms for the price of only one human head! To carry out the bargain, i.e. my arrest and surrender to the Bolsheviki, the enemies of yesterday, in quite friendly manner, had chosen a mixed commission. The sailors and Cossacks were ready to rush into my rooms at any moment.

. . . The agreement between the Cossacks and the sailors seemed to settle the situation finally, leaving me no avenue of escape. But a miracle happened!

Two men whom I had never met or known before came into the room—a soldier and a sailor.

'There is no time to lose. Put this on.'

'This' consists of a sailor's cloak, a sailor's hat and automobile goggles. The cloak is too short for me. The hat is too small and persists in falling back on my neck. The masquerade attire appears ludicrous and dangerous. But there is nothing to be done. I have only a few minutes.

'At the gate, before the palace, an automobile awaits you.'

We say goodbye.

Together—the sailor and I—we walk out of my rooms through the back door. Two sailors come passing the door.

They walk slowly across the empty corridor, engaged in quiet, nonchalant conversation. The rectangular corridor seems endless.

Finally, we are at the stairway. We go below to the only exit, already occupied by a mixed guard of Cossacks and sailors. The least mistake, an uncertain step, we will be discovered and all will be lost.

But we do not seem to think of that possibility at all. Our bodies move quite automatically, with perfectly balanced precision, like good machines. We pass the guard at the entrance door. Nothing!

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

We move under the arch. We look around. There is no one to be seen! No automobile. We cannot understand at first what has happened.

We walk on.

Where? We don't know. To move faster is impossible.

'There has been a mix-up,' says my new comrade.

'Let us go back,' I reply.

We turn back.

We are again under the arch. We look around. We are now being observed.

We re-enter the palace, through the door opposite to the one through which we left. This door leads straight to the guard-room.

We hear a diminishing distant roar. Dybenko's sailors and Krasnov's Cossacks are running upstairs to arrest me.

At this moment we are met by the same friend who told us that an automobile would be waiting for us at the exit.

Imperceptibly, with an air of complete indifference, he passes us, saying:

'There has been a misunderstanding; the automobile is waiting for you at the exit from the town, at the Egyptian gates.'

We turn and appear for the third time under the arch.

This is already too much. A guard takes a step forward in our direction. But here, under the arch, stands a trusted friend, an officer placed there for possible 'necessity'. He is covered with bandages; his face and body bear the scars of war. He 'suddenly' grows faint and falls straight into the arms of him, a sailor or Cossack—I do not remember—who was about to approach us.

All eyes turn upon the officer who has fainted. We slip through.

We march through the city. The road is long. Gradually we put on speed. We meet a cab. We jump in.

'Go!'

From a distance we see the machine at the Egyptian gates. It seems as if we will never reach it. We almost stifle with impatience. Finally we are at our destination. We push into the hand of the cabman a ridiculously large bill. His eyes look with surprise at the machine, flying at breakneck speed.

The machine is an excellent one. So is the chauffeur, an aviator. We speed along the *chaussée* towards Luga at a fan-

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

tastic rate. The chauffeur is master of the wheel. Inside the car are hand grenades. In the event of necessity we will hurl them at our pursuers.

A few minutes after our escape the pursuit begins. Where and how I escaped is a puzzle to everybody in the palace.

Some friends at the palace take a most active part in the preparations. Our soldier, a chauffeur, a man absolutely devoted to me, appears 'infuriated' at the escape. He volunteers to lead the pursuit. In my own machine, one I had used at the front, he follows along the route of our escape.

Others take the opposite direction. The automobile driven by my 'pursuer' is filled with enemies. But this does not disturb him. While at full speed the excellent machine 'suddenly' breaks down. We can be no longer overtaken.

But we do not know this. We speed on. But where are we going? Surely, not to Luga? We have not the slightest idea of what has taken place there in these last hours.

Nearby, in the woods, there is a little peasant homestead. The occupants are simple folk, with no interest in politics, but honest.

They are acquaintances of the sailor friend with whom I escaped from the palace, although he has not been to see them for more than a year. We look around the *chaussée*. Not a soul is to be seen either in front or behind. We stop. Both of us jump out and disappear in the thick of the wood. The automobile proceeds.

From afar we hear the farewell of its horn.

On November 9th, the day Kerensky launched his counter-attack on the Bolsheviki, armed combat broke out between the forces of the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviki in Moscow, Russia's second city after Petrograd. By November 15th the Bolsheviki had taken over the power in Moscow too. On the move again, John Reed dashed from Petrograd to Moscow just after the Bolshevik coup:

The station at Moscow was deserted. We went to the office of the Commissar, in order to arrange for our return tickets. He was a sullen youth with the shoulder-straps of a lieutenant; when we showed him our papers from Smolny, he lost his temper and declared that he was no Bolshevik, that he represented the Com-

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

mittee of Public Safety. . . . It was characteristic—in the general turmoil attending the conquest of the city, the chief railway station had been forgotten by the victors. . . .

Not a cab in sight. A few blocks down the street, however, we woke up a grotesquely-padded *izvoschchik* asleep upright on the box of his little sleigh. ‘How much to the centre of the town?’

He scratched his head. ‘The *barini* won’t be able to find a room in any hotel,’ he said. ‘But I’ll take you around for a hundred roubles. . . .’ Before the Revolution it cost two! We objected, but he simply shrugged his shoulders. ‘It takes a good deal of courage to drive a sleigh nowadays,’ he went on. We could not beat him down below fifty. . . . As we sped along the silent, snowy half-lighted streets, he recounted his adventures during the six days’ fighting. ‘Driving along, or waiting for a fare on the corner,’ he said, ‘all of a sudden pooff! a cannon ball exploding here, pooff! a cannon ball there, ratt-ratt! a machine-gun. . . . I gallop, the devils shooting all around, I get to a nice quiet street and stop, doze a little, pooff! another cannon ball, ratt-ratt! . . . Devils! Devils! Devils! Brrr!’

In the centre of the town the snow-piled streets were quiet with the stillness of convalescence. Only a few arc-lights were burning, only a few pedestrians hurried along the sidewalks. An icy wind blew from the great plain, cutting to the bone. At the first hotel we entered an office illuminated by two candles.

‘Yes, we have some very comfortable rooms, but all the windows are shot out. If the *gospodin* does not mind a little fresh air. . . .’

Down the Tverskaia the shop-windows were broken, and there were shell-holes and torn-up paving stones in the street. Hotel after hotel, all full, or the proprietors still so frightened that all they could say was, ‘No, no, there is no room! There is no room!’ On the main streets, where the great banking-houses and mercantile houses lay, the Bolshevik artillery had been indiscriminately effective. As one Soviet official told me, ‘Whenever we didn’t know just where the *yunkers* and White Guards were, we bombarded their pocket-books. . . .’

At the big Hotel National they finally took us in; for we were foreigners, and the Military Revolutionary Committee had promised to protect the dwellings of foreigners. . . . On the top floor the manager showed us where shrapnel had shattered several

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

windows. 'The animals!' said he, shaking his fist at imaginary Bolsheviks. 'But wait! Their time will come; in just a few days now their ridiculous Government will fall, and then we shall make them suffer!'

We dined at a vegetarian restaurant with the enticing name, 'I Eat Nobody', and Tolstoy's picture prominent on the walls, and then sallied out into the streets.

Being a strong sympathizer of the Bolsheviks, Reed took part in the funeral ceremony of their dead after the Moscow fighting. His description of the scene transforms itself into a pagan hymn of praise for the Revolution:

We forced our way through the dense mass packed near the Kremlin wall, and stood upon one of the dirt-mountains. Already several men were there, among them Muranov, the soldier who had been elected Commandant of Moscow—a tall, simple-looking, bearded man with a gentle face.

Through all the streets to the Red Square the torrents of people poured, thousands upon thousands of them, all with the look of the poor and the toiling. A military band came marching in, playing the *Internationale*, and spontaneously the song caught and spread like wind-ripples on a sea, slow and solemn. From the top of the Kremlin wall gigantic banners unrolled to the ground; red, with great letters in gold and white, saying, 'Martyrs of the Beginning of World Social Revolution', and 'Long Live the Brotherhood of Workers of the World'.

A bitter wind swept the Square, lifting the banners. Now from the far quarters of the city the workers of the different factories were arriving, with their dead. They could be seen coming through the Gate, the blare of their banners and the dull red—like blood—of the coffins they carried. These were rude boxes, made of unplanned wood and daubed with crimson, borne high on the shoulders of rough men who marched with tears streaming down their faces, and followed by women who sobbed and screamed or walked stiffly with white, dead faces. Some of the coffins were open, the lid carried behind them; others were covered with gilded or silvered cloth, or had a soldier's hat nailed on the top. There were many wreaths of hideous artificial flowers. . . .

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Through an irregular lane that opened and closed again, the procession slowly moved towards us. Now through the Gate was flowing an endless stream of banners, all shades of red, with silver and gold lettering, knots of crêpe hanging from the top—and some Anarchist flags, black with white letters. The band was playing the Revolutionary Funeral March, and against the immense singing of the mass of people, standing uncovered, the paraders sang hoarsely, choked with sobs. . . .

Between the factory workers came companies of soldiers with their coffins, too, and squadrons of cavalry, riding at salute, and artillery batteries, the cannon wound with red and black—forever, it seemed. Their banners said: 'Long Live the Third International!' or 'We Want an Honest, General, Democratic Peace!'

Slowly the marchers came with their coffins to the entrance of the grave, and the bearers clambered up with their burdens and went down into the pit. Many of them were women—squat, strong, proletarian women. Behind the dead came other women—women young and broken, or old, wrinkled women making noises like hurt animals, who tried to follow their sons and husbands into the Brotherhood Grave, and shrieked when compassionate hands restrained them. The poor love each other so!

All the long day the funeral procession passed, coming in by the Iberian Gate and leaving the Square by way of the Nikolskaia, a river of red banners, bearing words of hope and brotherhood and stupendous prophecies, against a background of fifty thousand people—and under the eyes of the world's workers and their descendants forever. . . .

One by one the five hundred coffins were laid in the pits. Dusk fell, and still the banners came drooping and fluttering, the band played the Funeral March and the huge assemblage chanted. In the leafless branches of the trees above the grave the wreaths were hung, like strange, multi-coloured blossoms. Two hundred men began to shovel in the dirt. It rained dully down upon the coffins with a thudding sound, audible beneath the singing. . . .

The lights came out. The last banners passed and the last moaning women, looking back with awful intensity as they went. Slowly from the great Square ebbed the proletarian tide. . . .

I suddenly realized that the devout Russian people no longer

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

needed priests to pray them into heaven. On earth they were building a kingdom more bright than any heaven had to offer, and for which it was a glory to die. . . .

Reed was to die of typhus in Moscow in 1920. He was given a State funeral and his ashes were placed in the Kremlin wall, near the martyrs of the Moscow revolution whom he had hymned in his book. But in Stalin's time his famous account of the Revolution was banned in Russia, since it mentioned the revolutionary deeds of many Bolshevik leaders like Trotsky, whose reputations were destroyed by their erstwhile comrades in arms in the years after 1917.

Moscow followed Petrograd on the revolutionary path, but the rest of the country still wallowed in a mire of indecision or sheer ignorance. Not far from Moscow, in a provincial town which had witnessed little of the Revolution except for the Imperial train speeding through its station on the way from the front carrying Nicholas II back to his Government, nothing more positive than vague rumours had broken the troubled atmosphere. After the abdication the townsfolk had organized their own local government before orders came from Petrograd to do just that.

An Englishwoman employed as a governess in a Russian noble family in the town kept a diary of her daily life from November 1917:

December 20th

Yesterday we were all at the Countess's. Everyone hoped that the Tsar would get safely out of Russia. Although not in the newspapers, it is reported that the Tsar's safety was the first condition the Germans imposed on the Russians. Both yesterday and today it was said that there are many Germans in Petrograd and the German prisoners are being armed. The bailiff of the First Estate came to say goodbye; he goes to the Ukraine. If only all Little Russians answer the call as promptly! Maria Petrovna had private news that many good soldiers are marching from X—to Moscow (trains were refused them): she has been asked to see that they get food here.

The peasants forbid anything to be sent from the First Estate.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Those of the First Estate village are behaving well; all the trouble is being caused by two villages farther off. Some of the First Estate peasants were here today and promised to guard Maria Petrovna if she wishes to go back to her house. She has been all day long at the hospital superintending the sale of some of the stock which is no longer needed. . . .

The Baroness tries to avoid political conversation, but this break-up of Russia is dreadful for her; she was so proud of her country. I have a feeling that we must keep strong and gay, that worse is to come (although since yesterday there is a turn for the better, one sees whence light may come) and that we shall need all our strength. Our town is not a place which can be given up without a dispute, though, thank God, the committee is dismissing the soldiers as fast as it can; the doctors give sick leave to all, no matter how fit they may be; thus the rabble grows numerically weaker, and down south the others are forming. Here the schoolchildren, boys and girls, have started meetings, at which they take ether. Maria Petrovna has gone to talk matters over with the masters and mistresses. The Bolsheviks here offered to give the officers back their epaulettes, but they said they would not receive them from such hands.

Up to now the Baroness felt safe enough in her somewhat lonely house, for a little way down the road was a military building always guarded at night by soldiers from one of the good regiments; now the sentinels are no longer there, so that it is somewhat risky to leave the Baroness alone with the three old ladies. We have sent her one of the Austrian prisoners. Our Austrians are quite reliable; they are none of them German-speaking, all are Slavonians.

In Petrograd circulars were sent round, they say by Germans, telling the people to await quietly their new rulers! What impudence! German princes or a member of the old family under Willy's protection? The Kaiser is getting his own back now; the Tsarina used to be so rude to him—

December 23rd

Maria Petrovna received a telegram from the Second Estate. It is the same there as in the First Estate: the peasants have taken the land, the livestock, the house, etc. I received a letter from Mary O——. The peasants came to her father with a copy of the

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

new decrees, which say that the land must at once be divided among them, and quite politely asked him to divide it up for them, as they knew he would do it best. He answered that they might divide it as they pleased, but that he would not have them interfere with his cows, that he would keep them or sell them when, as and how he pleased. It is rumoured that there is once more fighting in Moscow. Many expect trouble here. An Austrian (lately married to a Russian, formerly resident in Buda-Pesth) said that the six months' martial law in Buda-Pesth was dreadful; he declares, in fact, that if three people met in the street and stopped to talk, one was shot. Tolstoy's grandchildren, the ones I met at X——, have been living all this while on a small piece of land which they themselves tilled; they worked, in fact, just like peasants. They have been sent away from their home and on foot. Yet they say that this is not class warfare, that all true workers are welcomed! The town Bolsheviks complain of 'the criminal waste of water' caused by the bourgeois washing so much. Considering that each householder provides himself with water as best he can (we send a horse and barrel down to the river), any limit to our supply would be rather an interference with our liberty.

By the turn of the year the Bolsheviks held the whip hand in Petrograd and Moscow. It looked as if their rule was of a somewhat more permanent nature than that of any of the Coalition Governments which had preceded them through 1917. Two main centres of political opposition were wiped out in 1918—the long-promised Constituent Assembly with its non-Bolshevik majority, and the Monarchy, which suffered physical martyrdom. The fate of both institutions is recorded below by eye-witnesses who were privileged to watch these turning points in Russian and world history.

It was difficult for the Bolsheviks to dispense with the Constituent Assembly, since they had themselves voted for it, and as a future instrument of government it had acquired great popularity amongst all parties and classes. Therefore after the Bolshevik coup of November 7th, elections for the Assembly were held as planned on November 25th. The Bolsheviks gained a majority in the cities, but the Socialist Revolutionaries won the upper hand in the rest of the country and had an overall majority.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Lenin then tried to postpone the convening of the Assembly indefinitely, but on December 11th, the opening day set earlier in 1917 by the Provisional Government, deputies from all over Russia converged on the Tauride Palace, where the Assembly was supposed to meet, and protested against the Bolsheviks' action. Sorokin, who was one of the appointed deputies, found himself at the centre of the scene:

The legal opening day of the Constituent Assembly dawned beautifully clear. Blue sky, white snow, an auspicious background for the huge placards everywhere displayed. 'Long Life to the Constituent Assembly, the Master of Russia'. Crowds of people, bearing these standards, welcome the highest authority of the country, the real voice of the Russian people. As the deputies approached the Tauride Palace, thousands of people hailed them with deafening cheers. But when the deputies reached the gates they found them closed and guarded by Bolshevik Lettish soldiers, armed to the teeth.

Something had to be done, and at once. Climbing the iron fence of the Palace, I addressed the people while other deputies climbed and scrambled after me. They managed to unlock the gates and the crowds rushed in, filling the courtyard. Staggered at the audacity of this move, the Lettish soldiers hesitated. We attacked the doors of the Palace, also guarded by Lettish soldiers and officers, behind whom appeared Uritsky and other Bolsheviks. Again speaking to the people, I concluded by thanking the Lettish soldiers for their welcome to the highest authority in Russia and their apparent willingness to guard its liberties. At last I even embraced the commanding officer. The whole lot wavered in confusion and as a result the doors were opened and we walked in, many of the citizens following. In the passage Uritsky, an exceedingly repulsive Jew, demanded that we go to his office to register, but contemptuously we pushed him aside, saying that the Constitutional Assembly stood in no need of his services. In the Hall of the Palace we held our meeting and called upon the Russian nation to defend its Constitutional Assembly. A resolution was passed that the Assembly, in spite of every obstacle, should open on January 18th.

The Constituent Assembly duly met on January 18th, but only

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

for one day. Its collapse in the face of Bolshevik pressure has been recorded by Edgar Sisson, who was President Wilson's Special Representative in Russia from November 25, 1917:

Walking back to the hotel, I took a sledge to get a view of the parades before going to the Tauride Palace.

The processions were allowed to assemble unopposed. How many lines formed in different parts of the city I did not know. Three I placed and I heard of others. One gathered in the plaza by the Winter Palace. One raised its standards in the Field of Mars. One sought to come across the Neva to the Liteinyi on the Alexandrovskii Bridge. All were to converge at the Tauride Palace.

The first parade from the Winter Palace was passing along the Nevskii in very good order when I saw it. I drove along the line for several blocks. As many women as men were in the double column. Banners, on which the most common inscription was 'All Power to the Constituent Assembly', were borne at the van. The marchers might have been the middle-class citizens of any continental city or of New York or Chicago. Only their terrible soberness set them apart from their kind all over the world. Until deprived of occupation they had been teachers and lawyers, clerks and business men, engineers and builders, Government functionaries and technicians. Among them they represented most of the city's culture, most of its individual mental initiative. Their dress was neat and poor. The ornate were not here.

The walks of the Nevskii were crowded with onlookers, hostile most of them, smiling labourers out to see a show. They jeered but did not attack; and I got the impression that the Bolsheviks had decided to protect the paraders and divert the lines peacefully in the wide areas adjacent to the Tauride Palace. The reality was that no trouble was desired in the centre of the city. The policing there was entrusted less to the infantry soldiers and the sailors than to the cavalry Cossacks.

Retracing the route to the Mikhailovskii, I was driven toward the Field of Mars. On the way I heard shots but could not tell from what quarter they came. At the Field I came upon a scene of confusion, though not of battle. A procession, I was informed, had moved in the direction of the Summer Garden, intending to pass the bridge over the Fontanka Canal and so reach the Liteinyi

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Prospect. Report had come back that this parade had been broken. One of its marshals, standing in a crowd near where the martyrs of the March Revolution were buried, was telling excitedly of the disaster. He had run far.

The distance, however, by short cut was not so great. The driver ran his horse and in a few minutes I was on the Liteinyi, in the wreck of the procession, or rather of two processions, the one I had left on the Nevskii and the one that had started from Mars Field. The latter, coming upon the Liteinyi just about the time the former had halted, broke up, I think, more from panic than attack. The head of the first procession had come squarely against the Bolshevik bulwark several blocks ahead at the corner of the Liteinyi and the Shpalernaia, where a right turn was to have been made to the Tauride.

The Bolshevik patrols scattered this van and the whole procession rolled back on itself through the length of the Liteinyi. Yet our sledges (one following mine) were engulfed in no *mêlée*. For a moment or two I thought we had missed the scene. Then I perceived that the street was thickly peopled but not at its centre. Much snow had fallen lately and was piled in great heaps along the kerbs. Behind the snow banks and in the door and area ways were the remnants of the parade. Seeing that we were not soldiers, the routed members crawled into view or peeped over the top of the snow piles. Over the *débris* of their fallen and broken banners we glided. No bodies or dead or wounded were anywhere in sight, though men shouted to us that there had been slaughter near.

Blood certainly was shed. We moved back and forth on the Liteinyi and into the side streets where the flight had continued. The blocks on both sides of the Furstatskaia were in disarray. The snow in the Liteinyi and for a considerable distance in the Furstatskaia was bloodstained in many places. Some of the paraders claimed there had been shooting from the roofs. Lettish soldiers came running from somewhere and soon established a patrol along the Liteinyi. They were greeted with cries, 'Murderers of the People!' They paid no attention and went briskly about—pulling persons from the snow, helping them to their feet and ordering them to move out of the neighbourhood. In reply to a question, a soldier in charge of the squads nearest said that his men had done no shooting.

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

The Bolsheviks later laid the blame for all killings of the day upon provocators as the most convenient of counter-revolutionary ogres, although they admitted there was shooting where the vans of parades were dispersed.

The [*United States*] embassy was further down the Furstat-skaia and, leaving the vanished parade, we went there before proceeding to the Tauride Palace. I had thought the Ambassador might care to witness the opening of the Constituent Assembly. However, he judged that his presence would be inadvisable.

*

Getting into the Constituent Assembly was a matter of parley. Our passes opened a way through the close-drawn sailor cordons in the streets and about the Tauride Park, and through the Palace guards themselves. Inside the building, however, we encountered a point of etiquette. We were not provided with credentials from the Constituent Assembly itself. The Bolshevik deputy commissars in lengthy conversations said they did not mind what we did, but that they were there to 'protect' the Constituent Assembly, not to say who could enter it. So we dug into our pockets for some paper bearing an embassy seal, nice and red. Finding one, we marched to the entrance of the visitors' gallery, pronounced the word '*Diplomatique*', showed the seal, and were ushered with much courtesy to a trio of boxes set aside for foreign diplomats. Several Frenchmen and Englishmen in uniform had preceded us but the boxes were commodious and there were chairs on the gallery rail for our small party.

The arrangement of the chamber was formal and colourful. The seats for the four hundred-odd delegates were planned much as in our legislative halls: chairs, some with desks in front, aligned in fan-like formation away from the presidium, which in the Russian manner included not only a rostrum but also seating space for the members of the steering committees and for important personages. Galleries nearly encircled the auditorium and even ran above the presidium. The chairs were all upholstered in red leather, and the decoration scheme of the hall was in red and gold. Illumination was soft and shadowless. The place was fitting for a parliament.

The seats were sparsely occupied, the presidium was vacant, and the opening of the session not in early prospect. The likeness

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

to a civilian body meeting for debate and quiet action ended with the survey of the document-piled desks and the clusters of dignified but restless delegates.

The Constituent Assembly was to meet within a ring of steel. Armed guards were all about us—sailors with pistols in their belts and rifles on their shoulders, soldiers with rifles and with cartridge belts strapped outside their overcoats, sleeve-banded deputy commissars with pistols at side. The galleries held scarce a score of visitors, and yet resounded to the tramp of feet. A line of guards stood or walked in the connecting corridor, and in every box, including our own, was a pair of sailors or soldiers. The ushers, even those on the assembly floor, were armed men.

The wait was tedious. We had entered a few minutes before one o'clock. Three o'clock passed without sign of beginning. A light breakfast had not been followed by lunch. Hunger sent us searching for food. Sure enough there was a tearoom in the building and we found it better populated than the session floor. Tea only, however, was being served—no soup or bread. We drank tall tumblers of tea and went back to our seats, and this time we were none too soon. The presidium was filling. Two major groups were apparent there, on different sides of the ample platform, the committee of the Right Social Revolutionaries and their allies on one side, and of the Bolsheviks and their minor party adherents on the other. Members of the Central Council of the Soviets were there, and presently we made out Lenin among them, in the rear of the presidium, under the gallery. His lieutenants slipped back to him for counsel occasionally during the day but at no time during the day or night did he participate in debate or approach the rostrum.

We wondered what his appearance meant. Did the Bolsheviks have hope of a majority in the Constituent Assembly itself? Were they nearing the national victory of controlling that body? That, naturally, had been their aim in successively postponing the sitting of the body, in putting their own candidates up for election as delegates, in eliminating the Cadets from the lists of candidates. If they had thus won a majority they would be accused of cheating in the count at the polls and of riding over the will of the voters, but notwithstanding would have increased the semblance of legal control. None of the preliminary figures, however, indicated that the Bolsheviks had a majority in the

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

Assembly. Estimates had been as extreme as two to one votes against them on a test.

Shown to be in a minority, would they seize the Constituent Assembly by force and use it as their own instrument, or would they destroy it out of hand? They had threatened destruction. The day of answer had come.

In the turbulent minutes following four o'clock it seemed as if the Bolsheviks had won initial parliamentary control. By Russian precedent the oldest member present calls a meeting to order. When all the delegates had taken their seats and the chair of the presiding officer was vacant, an old man, Shvetsov, rose from a place along the Right Socialist Revolutionaries and advanced towards the platform. Until then there had been silence. Uproar suddenly broke out among the Bolshevik delegates, stamping, shouting, hissing. The Social Revolutionaries responded by rising and applauding. The old man reached the chair and faced the delegates, but in the clamour his voice could not be heard. Several Bolsheviks on the platform tried to pull him from his place, but he lifted their hands away and continued to stand silently. The din increased.

Uritsky, the commandant of the Tauride, stepped forward but did not speak. Past him from the rear of the presidium came Sverdlov, a member of the Central Executive Committee [*and a Bolshevik leader*]. He walked in front of the old man, rang the bell and abruptly called the meeting to order. At sight of him the Bolsheviks stilled their outbreak so that his voice was heard. The opposition, bewildered, dropped into its seats. Sverdlov had made himself the temporary chairman by typical Lenin strategy. It looked as if the Bolsheviks were going to have their own way in everything.

In his speech which was his right as temporary chairman, Sverdlov read the Declaration of Rights of the Bolsheviks, and they cheered every clause; and at its conclusion they rose and sang 'The International', a socialist hymn to which the Social Revolutionaries also had to give lip service. The Bolsheviks had staged themselves magnificently, manoeuvring with a solidarity in contrast to the wavering leadership of the Social Revolutionaries.

The real grapple for the permanent chairmanship remained, and for this the Bolsheviks had reserved a flourish. They put forward as their candidate not a member of their own party and not

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

a man, but the slender, flaming Spiridonova, the woman leader of the peasants, member of the Social Revolutionary party of the Left. Crafty politics, surely, not only for the day but for the morrow. Who knows how much the compliment may have influenced Spiridonova when the following week in the All-Russian Soviet she led the peasants and her party definitely into the Bolshevik ranks?

The Right Social Revolutionaries nominated Chernov, their leader. The vote was by ball, a weary business of distribution, collection, and placing the balls in glass vessels. By the accompanying noise Spiridonova would have been judged the victor, but the count spoke decisively for Chernov. He had 244 votes and Spiridonova 153. Surprisingly, the Bolsheviks accepted defeat without new tumult. The session took up an orderly progress.

Chernov's address when he took the chair was largely an exposition of the Social Revolutionary Declaration, nowise new. His attack on the Bolshevik programme was energetic, but his emphasis that the Constituent Assembly could get peace where the Bolsheviks had failed was not calculated to rouse any enthusiasm in me. Bukharin, the doctrinaire of the Bolsheviks, in his reply to Chernov stripped Bolshevism down to what it is when he asserted bluntly that it was more than nationalization of industry—that it was the dictatorship of an armed proletariat over all other classes, and that the party declaration provided that the middle and propertied classes should be disarmed.

While Chernov was speaking the Bolsheviks lolled in their seats, taking their cue from Lenin, who stretched himself full-length on a settee on the presidium, and pretended to sleep. In my notes I jotted 'A goat-getting stunt', and such it was, although Lenin may have had a restful nap as well.

When Bukharin started to talk, the party men leaned eagerly forward as if intent on every word, applauding frequently.

The tactics changed when the dark Tseretelli [*the Menshevik leader*] rose for counter-reply. Here was a hated challenger and a moving orator. Out of two months' hiding he had come, staking his liberty on his rights to attend the legislative body to which he had been elected. I have seen him couch-ridden and pallid. Now he had arisen in strength to smite his enemies. The notes I took did not do his speech justice, although they set forth the lawyer's

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

argument upon which the Social Revolutionaries counted most—the principle that the acts of the Soviet already had recognized the Constituent Assembly.

From argument he passed to invective, arraigning the Bolsheviks for their sins against the nation and the people. His sentences cracked like whip-lashes and cut as deep. Either by order or because of the spell of his oratory he was not interrupted after he began to speak. He was hooted when first he appeared on the platform, then won silence as an orator will. His voice was clear and musical. He spoke for less than ten minutes, and in six weeks the Bolsheviks were not through answering him.

To no other hostile speech did they ever pay such attention. In a meeting of the Petrograd Soviet the next day, Zinoviev worked himself into a rage against Tseretelli, and the Bolshevik newspapers kept up a lengthy bombardment. Yet Tseretelli's outright statements were few and simple. He said that the Bolsheviks were miserable failures, that they were wrecking Russia, that their peace was conquest from without and civil war from within, and that they did not have the slightest idea of the meaning of creative socialism. And these opinions he put into language any Russian could understand.

The proof of this was the action of the sailor in our box. He cursed in monotone and several times raised his rifle threateningly. I doubt if he really meant to fire, and enough were near to prevent him, but he was tempted. One of us got the eye of his superior, lest accident happen, and had the emotional one removed. In the box next, shortly before, another sailor had amused himself by sighting at Chernov along the gun barrel, grinning the while. A passing commissar, smiling also, motioned him to lower the gun.

It was seven o'clock in the evening when Chernov was elected chairman and eleven o'clock when Tseretelli was safely off the rostrum. My stomach was empty and my head bowed down with oratory. Party caucuses were in prospect, with recess or adjournment likely. If I had been told that the Constituent Assembly would be dissolved at one o'clock, I would have tightened my belt and stayed on, and then would have seen the little that was recognizable as a moment of death. The Assembly in truth did not know that it was dead until after the event.

As a prologue to the notes of the day and night, I made a log

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

entry: 'Jan. 18th—(Friday). Collapse. Tonight's report six dead, thirty-four injured—probably underestimated.'

In the course of his efforts to disperse all the political elements opposed to Bolshevism, Lenin had outlawed the Cadet Party at the end of 1917 and arrested two of its leaders, Shingarev and Kokoshkin, who had been nominated deputies to the Constituent Assembly. Shingarev has already appeared in these pages, hurrying through the streets of Petrograd with Shulgin on his way to the Duma at the beginning of the March Days. The two men were murdered in a detention hospital on January 19th, the day after the abortive opening of the Assembly. Izgoev, a fellow Cadet, soon heard the terrible news:

I went out for a walk early in the morning [of January 20th] . . . and unexpectedly ran into the editor, M. I. Ganfam. He said to me: 'Come along; a terrible thing has happened . . . the watchman from the Mariinskii hospital has just come to say that in the course of the night the sailors killed the Cadets' [A. I. Shingarev and F. I. Kokoshkin] . . . We hurried to the hospital and learned from the nurse that . . . the two men were asleep when several armed men entered the room of the patients and shot them in cold blood. . . . The murder of these two members of the Constituent Assembly completes, as it were, the death of the Assembly itself. . . . On the street in front of the hospital a large crowd had gathered. . . . 'What is there to weep about! . . . They should all be killed. They helped Kerensky to plunder Russia. . . . Shingarev, as Minister of Finance, stole twelve millions. . . .'

When someone tried to tell the sailor that all these reports were lies, that the murdered men were poor, that Shingarev with his large family lived in a small fifth-floor four-room apartment, he would not believe it and cried out: . . . 'We know . . . who you are. You, who defend the capitalist Ministers. . . . You, Cadets, . . . were declared outside the law of the proletarian government, and there must have been a good reason for that. Those at the head of our affairs are as clever as you are.'

It was clear that some of his auditors were on his side. It was not safe to argue with him. . . . I could not help but think of the dead men who worked all their lives to enlighten these ignorant men and how they had been recompensed for their efforts. . . .

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

Izvestiia's comment on the assassinations was as follows:

The death of Shingarev and Kokoshkin is terrible. . . . It is hard to believe . . . that there are people so low as to attack and kill in hospital two defenceless sick men. . . . This murder is a blot on the honour of the Revolution. . . . It helps only the enemies of the Revolution. . . . These ignorant people did not realize that in killing Shingarev and Kokoshkin they were working in the interests of the enemies of the Revolution. . . . Whatever the facts are, the murderers must be found and brought before the revolutionary court. There must be no stain on the Revolution.'

Dybenko made a statement of the affair in his capacity as Bolshevik leader of the Baltic Fleet:

During the night of January 19th-20th Shingarev and Kokoshkin were murdered at the Mariinskii hospital. . . . According to the information of hospital attendants, the murder was committed by men wearing sailors' uniforms. The affair must be thoroughly investigated. The honour of the revolutionary fleet must not bear the stain of an accusation of revolutionary sailors having murdered their helpless enemies, rendered harmless by imprisonment.

I call upon all who took part in the murder . . . to appear of their own accord before the revolutionary tribunal. . . .

The murder of two innocent men provoked exclamations of genuine horror from all sides, including the Bolsheviks themselves, but the Revolution was only just beginning to take its toll of human lives. A few years later the deaths of hundreds at a time was to produce hardly a murmur.

Beating off its rivals with one hand, the infant Bolshevik Government tried to set in motion the wheels of a new way of life with the other. The origins of the Soviet bureaucracy were as humble and as comical as those of any brand new institution attempting to create order after the chaos of revolution. The Chief of the Bureau of Legislation of the Council of People's Commissars [the Sovnarkom] has left an account of how the Council ground slowly into action in the first days of its existence:

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

During the first days of its existence the Sovnarkom met in room No. 36 in the Smolny Institute. The room was small and dirty. During these days the Sovnarkom and the party Central Committee were not clearly differentiated. . . .

The first law was published in No. 1 of the *Gazette of the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government*. . . . It authorized the local organs of administration . . . to requisition warehouses, stores, restaurants and other trading and industrial establishments. . . . This decree was the only legal basis for the numerous requisitions which local 'Sovdeps' afterwards undertook. . . . The Government held no regular sessions at that time. The first decree of the Sovnarkom was drafted by Kamenev, Stalin and myself. . . . There was much talk how to sign it, 'Lenin', 'Ulianov', or both. Stalin signed 'Vladimir Ulianov-Lenin' and sent it to the Press. . . .

Of the first fifteen decrees which are found in No. 1 of the *Collection of Laws*, only two were actually considered by the Sovnarkom. . . . I remember Lenin's astonishment when he first saw . . . the decree No. 12, under his signature, which conferred legislative powers on the Sovnarkom and gave the Central Executive Committee the right to annul the decision of the Government.

Bolshevik sympathizers hoped for jobs in the Government, and more than one of them were given rewards that were incongruous though generous, as happened to a young man called Pestovsky who went to the Smolny Institute in search of a minor post:

The room was rather large. In one corner the Secretary of the Sovnarkom, Comrade N. P. Gorbunov, was working at a small table. . . . Farther on, Comrade Menzhinsky, looking very tired, was lounging on a sofa . . . over which was the sign: 'The People's Commissariat of Finance'.

I sat down near Menzhinsky and began to talk with him. In the most innocent way he started to question me about my earlier career and became curious in regard to my past studies.

I answered that I had worked at the University of London where, among other subjects, I had studied finance.

Menzhinsky suddenly arose, fixed his eyes upon me, and categorically declared: 'In that case we shall make you the director of the State Bank.'

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

I was frightened and answered . . . that I had no desire to hold this position, since it was entirely 'outside my line'. Saying nothing, Menzhinsky asked me to wait, and left the room.

He was gone for some time, and then returned with a paper signed by Il'ich [Lenin] on which it was stated that I was the director of the State Bank.

I became even more dumbfounded, and began to beg Menzhinsky to revoke the appointment, but he remained inflexible on this point.

Far away from the turmoil of politics, the Imperial Family lived quietly in the provincial town of Tobolsk, whither they had been sent in August 1917. Although they were safe from the Petrograd mob, the family suffered humiliation daily at the hands of the soldiers who guarded them. Colonel Kobylinsky, who has already appeared in these pages as the man sent by General Kornilov to take over the military command at Tsarskoe Selo after the Tsar's abdication, accompanied the family to Tobolsk and remained responsible for keeping them under military surveillance. Here he gives a picture of the sad life at Tobolsk:

On Christmas Day [1917] the Imperial Family were present in church during the early service, and after the service the customary Thanksgiving prayer was read. On account of the intense cold, I usually relieved the sentries before the end of the service, and I only left a small number on duty by the church; the older ones came to pray, but the majority came to warm themselves. The total number of soldiers in the church at any one time was generally very small. But on this particular day I noticed that more soldiers than usual were present, and I thought that the reason for this was that Christmas Day was considered a holiday. When the Thanksgiving service was coming to an end I left the church and ordered a soldier to call the guard. I did not re-enter the church and did not hear the end of the service. But after the Imperial Family had left the church, Pankratov said to me: 'Do you know what the priest has done? He has read the prayer for the prolongation of the life of the Emperor, the Empress and the whole family, mentioning their names in the prayer, and directly the soldiers heard it they began to murmur.' Father Vasiliev's useless loyalty resulted in a great disturbance, as the soldiers

started a riot and made up their minds to kill, or at least to arrest the officiating clergy. It was most difficult to persuade them not to take any aggressive steps and await the decision of an investigating committee. Bishop Hermogen immediately transferred Father Vasiliev to the Abalakskii Monastery, as the situation was so strained, and I went to see the Bishop personally and asked him to appoint another clergyman. After that Father Krynov officiated at the services for the Imperial Family.

The result of this fresh trouble was that the soldiers lost all faith in my work and kept on saying: 'When the service takes place in the house, most probably there is a prayer for the prolongation of the life of the Imperial Family.' So the men decided not to allow the Imperial Family to go to church and only allowed them to pray in the presence of a soldier. The sole concession I was able to obtain was permission for the Imperial Family to visit church on the important holy days in the Orthodox Church. I was forced to submit to the men's decision that a soldier should be present at divine service in the Governor's house. In this way the tactless behaviour of Father Vasiliev resulted in the soldiers being permitted to enter the Governor's house, which prior to this time they had not been allowed to do. Another incident happened a little later. A soldier by the name of Rybakov, who was present at divine service, heard the clergyman mention the name of Tsaritsa Alexandra (a saint): a new grievance immediately arose and I had to send for Rybakov, find a calendar, and explain to him that Tsaritsa Alexandra did not mean the *Empress* Alexandra, but was only the name of a saint, known as Tsaritsa Alexandra.

When the demobilization of the army occurred, my riflemen began to take their discharges. To replace the old soldiers who were leaving, some young ones were sent from the reserves of Tsarskoe Selo. And these soldiers, having been in the midst of the political struggle, were now vicious and corrupt. . . .

Not knowing what other objections they could make, the soldiers decided to forbid members of the suite to leave the house. I tried to explain how ridiculous this was, and so the men changed their minds and decided to let members of the suite go out accompanied by a sentry. Finally they got tired of this and allowed everybody to go out twice a week, but not for longer than two hours.

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

On one occasion, as he wished to say goodbye to a large number of departing soldiers, the Emperor and the Empress ascended a small hill which had been made out of the frozen snow for the amusement of the children. The soldiers who remained were very angry at this and levelled the little hill to the ground, saying that somebody might easily shoot at the Imperial Family when they were on the top of the hill, and that if this happened they would be held responsible.

One day the Emperor dressed himself in a Caucasian tribal dress and put a dagger in his belt. A commotion instantly arose amongst the soldiers, who cried: 'They must be searched, they carry weapons.' I made every effort to persuade the men not to insist upon this search. I went to the Emperor and explained the situation and asked him to give me the dagger. . . .

. . . When one day the soldiers made a new resolution that all officers must remove their shoulder-straps, I felt I could bear no more. I knew that I had absolutely lost all control of the men, and I fully realized my impotence! So I went to the Governor's house and asked Tegleva to tell the Emperor that I begged him to receive me. The Emperor at once received me in Tegleva's room, and I said to him: 'Your Majesty, all authority is fast slipping out of my hands. The men have removed our shoulder-straps! I cannot be useful to you any more, so I wish to resign, if you do not object. My nerves are strained. I am exhausted.' The Emperor put his arm on my shoulder, his eyes filled with tears. He replied: 'I implore you to remain. Evgenii Stepanovich, remain for my sake, for the sake of my wife and for the sake of my children. You must stand by us. You see how all of us are suffering.'

Then he embraced me and we kissed each other, and I resolved to remain.

It then happened that Dorofeev, a soldier of the Fourth Regiment . . . came to me and said that at a meeting of the Soldiers' Committee it had been decided that the Emperor must remove his shoulder-straps, and his orders were to go with me and remove them. I tried to persuade Dorofeev not to do this. He behaved most aggressively . . . and was extremely angry during the conversation. I pointed out that it would be very embarrassing if the Emperor were to refuse. The soldier answered: 'If he refuses I will tear them off.' I then said: 'But suppose he strikes you?'

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Dorofeev replied: 'Then I will strike him also.' What more could I do? I started to try to persuade him, saying that things were not always as easy as they seemed, and I told him that the Emperor was a cousin of the King of England, and that very serious complications might follow. I advised the soldiers to ask instructions from Moscow, and as I had them on that point they went away and wired to Moscow. I then went to see Tatishchev and asked him to beg the Emperor to refrain from wearing shoulder-straps in the presence of the soldiers. After that the Emperor wore a black sheepskin coat with no shoulder-straps.

Swings had been made for the children, as the Grand Duchess liked to swing, but the soldiers of the Second Regiment who were on sentry duty carved most indecent words on the seats of the swings. After the Emperor had seen this the seats were removed. This was done when Sergeant Shikunov was the captain of the guard. He was a Bolshevik.

I do not remember exactly which day I received a telegram from Karelin, the commissar in charge of the former Ministry of the Imperial Court. The telegram stated that the nation could no longer maintain the Tsar's family and they must support themselves, but the Soviets would give them a soldier's ration, quarters and heat.

Nicholas II kept a diary during these grim days in exile in his own country:

November 24th, Saturday (1917)

Much snow has fallen. No newspapers or telegrams have come from Petrograd for a long time. At such a grave time this is serious. The girls were occupied with the swings, jumping from them into a pile of snow. At nine o'clock there was a vesper service.

November 27th, Tuesday

Birthday of dear Mother and twenty-third anniversary of our wedding. At twelve, there was a religious service. The choir got things mixed up and sang out of tune, probably because it had not been rehearsing. The weather was sunny and warm, with gusty winds. After afternoon tea, I re-read my earlier diaries—pleasant occupation.

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

November 30th, Friday

The same disagreeable weather, with a penetrating wind. Heartbreaking to learn from the papers descriptions of what happened two weeks ago at Petrograd and Moscow. It is much worse and more dishonourable than before.

December 3rd, Monday

The frost increased and the day was clear. There was disaffection among the soldiers because they had not received their pay from Petrograd for three months. This was quickly settled by a temporary loan of the necessary sum from the bank. During the day I busied myself with the firewood. At nine, there was a vesper service.

The English tutor to the Tsar's children, who rejoiced in the name of Sidney Ivanovich Gibbes, has left a description of the daily routine at Tobolsk. Surrounded by a handful of faithful domestics and noble courtiers, the Romanovs did what they could to keep their sanity by continuing the ordered way of life to which they had been accustomed:

Our stay in Tobolsk was, on the whole, very agreeable. I did not see anything objectionable in the conditions of our life. Certainly there were some disadvantages compared with what it had been; and there were many trifles which created friction, but one soon became used to them.

We all worked very hard. The Empress taught theology to the children (all the children took lessons except Olga Nikolaevna, who had completed her studies in 1914). She also taught Tatiana Nikolaevna a little German. The Empress gave history lessons to the Tsarevich. Klavdia Mikhailovna Ritner gave instruction in mathematics and the Russian language to the Grand Duchesses Maria and Anastasia, and also to the Tsarevich. [Countess] Hendrykova gave history lessons to Tatiana Nikolaevna. I taught them English.

Lessons were given from 9 a.m. to eleven o'clock. From eleven to twelve o'clock the children were allowed to take a walk. Studies were resumed at twelve and continued for an hour. At 1 p.m. lunch was served. According to the doctor's orders, the Tsarevich had to rest on the sofa after lunch. Whilst he was lying down

Gillard [*the Swiss tutor*] and I used to read aloud to him. After this, Nagorny dressed the Tsarevich, and we went for a walk until four or five o'clock. After we returned the Emperor gave the Tsarevich his history lesson, and the Tsarevich usually liked to play one particular game called 'The slower you ride the further you go'. We divided into two sides to play this game. The Tsarevich, Gillard or myself were on one side, [*Prince*] Dolgoruky and Schneider on the other. The Tsarevich was extremely fond of the game, and Schneider used to put all her heart into it, but she occasionally quarrelled with Dolgoruky. This was really funny. We played the game nearly every day, and Schneider always used to say that she would never play again.

From 6 to 7 p.m. the Tsarevich took lessons with me or with Gillard. From 7 to 8 p.m. he prepared his lessons for the next day. Dinner was served at 8 p.m. After dinner the family assembled upstairs. Sometimes we played cards, and I often played double patience with Schneider. Tatishchev, Olga Nikolaevna, Dr. Botkin, Gillard and Dolgoruky played bridge. The children and the Emperor occasionally played bezique. The Emperor often read aloud.

Sometimes the Grand Duchesses Olga, Maria and Anastasia would go up to Demidova's rooms. . . . Occasionally Gillard, Dolgoruky, the Tsarevich or myself accompanied them. We always stayed some considerable time in this room, where we indulged in plenty of fun and laughter, and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

The Emperor rose early. At 9 a.m. he had tea in his working room, and then he read until 11 a.m. He then took a walk in the garden, and during the walk he always went in for some kind of physical exercise. In Tobolsk he frequently used to saw logs. With some outside assistance, the Emperor built a platform on the roof of the orangery, and a staircase, constructed by our united efforts, led up to the platform. The Emperor liked to sit on this platform when the weather was stormy. The Emperor usually stopped out of doors until noon, when he came in and went to his daughter's room, where sandwiches were served. Later he retired to his own quarters, and worked until it was time for lunch. After lunch the Emperor worked or walked in the garden till dusk. At 5 p.m. the family had tea, after which the Emperor used to read until supper time.



7. THE TSAR AND HIS FAMILY ON THE ROOF
OF THE HOUSE AT TOBOLSK
(Photo: Historisches Bildarchiv)

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

The Empress got up at different times, sometimes much later than others, but she was often ready at the same time as everybody else. She was never seen by strangers in the morning. There were times when the Empress only appeared at lunch. In the morning she worked or occupied herself with her children. She liked fancy work: embroidery or painting, and when there was nobody in the house, and she was left alone, she liked to play the piano.

Lunch and dinner were good. For lunch we used to have soup, fish, meat and dessert. Coffee was served upstairs. The dinner was similar to the lunch, with the difference that more fruit was served with it.

If the Emperor was present at dinner we used to sit in the following order: the Emperor sat in the middle of the table, the Empress opposite him, Hendrykova sat at the Emperor's right, and next to her sat the Grand Duchess Maria. At the Emperor's left sat Schneider and Dolgoruky. The Tsarevich sat at the Empress's right, at her left were Tatishchev and the Grand Duchess Tatiana. Gillard was seated at the end of the table, and opposite him were the Grand Duchess Anastasia and myself. If the Empress dined upstairs, her place was taken by the Grand Duchess Olga.

Botkin always dined with the Imperial Family, but he lunched with his own family. He usually sat between the Grand Duchess Olga and the Tsarevich. . . . The food was good and there was plenty of everything.

Besides dinner and lunch, tea was served twice daily.

In the morning the Emperor took tea with the Grand Duchess Olga in his working room. Tea was always served in the Emperor's working room in the evening, when only the family were present.

In April 1918 the Royal Family was moved from Tobolsk to Ekaterinburg in the Urals. The natural hostility of the local Soviet to their royal hostages grew in intensity when the anti-Bolshevik Czech Legion advanced on Ekaterinburg. Without waiting for orders from the Bolshevik leaders, the Ekaterinburg Soviet took upon itself the responsibility for dealing with the Tsar and his family. On July 16th Nicholas II was told that his household was to be moved once again, and that the family

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

should prepare for a journey. A local workman from a factory nearby witnessed what followed on the same night:

In the evening of July 16th, between 7 and 8 p.m., when the time for my duty had just begun, Commandant Yurovsky [*the head of the guard*] ordered me to take all the Nagan revolvers from the guards and to bring them to him. I took twelve revolvers from the sentries as well as from some other of the guards, and brought them to the commandant's office. Yurovsky said to me: 'We must shoot *them all* tonight, so notify the guards not to be alarmed if they hear shots.' I understood, therefore, that Yurovsky had it in his mind to shoot the whole of the Tsar's family, as well as the doctor and the servants who lived with them, but I did not ask him where or by whom the decision had been made. I must tell you that in accordance with Yurovsky's order the boy who assisted the cook was transferred in the morning to the guardroom (in the Popov house). The lower floor of Ipatiev's house was occupied by the Letts from the Letts Commune, who had taken up their quarters there after Yurovsky was made commandant. They were ten in number. At about ten o'clock in the evening, in accordance with Yurovsky's order, I informed the guards not to be alarmed if they should hear firing. About midnight Yurovsky woke up the Tsar's family. I do not know if he told them the reason they had been awakened and where they were to be taken, but I positively affirm that it was Yurovsky who entered the rooms occupied by the Tsar's family. Yurovsky had not ordered me or Dobrynin to awaken the family. In about an hour the whole of the family, the doctor, the maid and the waiters got up, washed and dressed themselves. Just before Yurovsky went to awaken the family, two members of the Extraordinary Commission [*of the Ekaterinburg Soviet*] arrived at Ipatiev's house. Shortly after one o'clock a.m., the Tsar, the Tsaritsa, their four daughters, the maid, the doctor, the cook and the waiter left their rooms. The Tsar carried the heir in his arms. The Emperor and the heir were dressed in 'gimnasterkas' [*soldiers' shirts*] and wore caps. The Empress and her daughters were dressed but their heads were uncovered. The Emperor, carrying the heir, preceded them. The Empress, her daughters and the others followed him. Yurovsky, his assistant and the two above-mentioned members of the Extraordinary Commission

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

accompanied them. I was also present. During my presence none of the Tsar's family asked any questions. They did not weep or cry. Having descended the stairs to the first floor, we went out into the court, and from there by the second door (counting from the gate) we entered the ground floor of the house. When the room (which adjoins the store-room with a sealed door) was reached, Yurovsky ordered chairs to be brought, and his assistant brought three chairs. One chair was given to the Emperor, one to the Empress, and the third to the heir. The Empress sat by the wall by the window, near the black pillar of the arch. Behind her stood three of her daughters (I knew their faces very well, because I had seen them every day when they walked in the garden, but I didn't know their names). The heir and the Emperor sat side by side almost in the middle of the room. Doctor Botkin stood behind the heir. The maid, a very tall woman, stood at the left of the door leading to the store-room; by her side stood one of the Tsar's daughters (the fourth). Two servants stood against the wall on the left from the entrance of the room.

The maid carried a pillow. The Tsar's daughters also brought small pillows with them. One pillow was put on the Empress's chair; another on the heir's chair. It seemed as if all of them guessed their fate, but not one of them uttered a single sound. At this moment eleven men entered the room: Yurovsky, his assistant, two members of the Extraordinary Commission, and seven Letts. Yurovsky ordered me to leave, saying: 'Go on to the street, see if there is anybody there, and wait to see whether the shots have been heard.' I went out to the court, which was enclosed by a fence, but before I got to the street I heard the firing. I returned to the house immediately (only two or three minutes having elapsed), and upon entering the room where the execution had taken place, I saw that all the members of the Tsar's family were lying on the floor with many wounds in their bodies. The blood was running in streams. The doctor, the maid and two waiters had also been shot. When I entered the heir was still alive and moaned a little. Yurovsky went up and fired two or three more times at him. Then the heir was still.

The sight of the murder and the smell of blood made me sick. Before the assassination, when Yurovsky distributed the revolvers, he gave me one but, as I said before, I did not take any part in the murder. After the assassination Yurovsky told me to bring some

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

guards to wash away the blood in the room. On the way to Popov's house I met two of the Senior Guards, Ivan Starkov and Constantin Dobrynin. They were running in the direction of Ipatiev's house. Dobrynin asked me: 'Has Nicholas II been shot?' I answered that Nicholas and the whole of his family had been shot. I brought twelve or fifteen guards back with me to the house. These men carried the dead bodies out to the motor lorry that waited near the entrance, and the bodies were placed on stretchers made from bedsheets and shafts of sledges taken from the yard. When they were loaded on the truck they were wrapped in soldiers' clothing. . . . The members of the Extraordinary Commission sat on the lorry and the truck drove off. I do not know in what direction the lorry went, neither do I know where the bodies were taken.

The corpses were carried to an abandoned mine shaft outside Ekaterinburg. There they were covered with vitriol and set alight. Other members of the Royal Family were murdered within the next few days. On July 25th the Czech Legion captured Ekaterinburg and found that the Royal Family had disappeared.

News of the murder of the Tsar filtered through to Lenin, who eventually ordered the arrest of those involved: five men were later executed.

In March 1918 the war against Germany was brought to an ignominious end by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, by which large Russian possessions in the west of the country were ceded to Germany. The signing of the treaty nearly rent asunder the Bolshevik Party, and faithful followers like the sailor revolutionary Dybenko left Lenin's side for good. Philips Price, the correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, went out of Petrograd in the spring of 1918 to see how the country was reacting to the new Government and the almost intolerable living conditions that had resulted from years of confusion:

By the middle of March the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of Peace with the Central Powers was ratified, and the Land Law had passed the Central Soviet Executive. Northern and Central Russia was settling down to its 'breathing space'. How was the country going to make use of it? Had the Soviets in the distant provinces the influence and the prestige to commence a plan of socialist re-

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

construction on the lines laid down by the Great Convention? In order to see how these questions could be answered, I decided to visit the province of Vologda where, incidentally, I might recoup myself from the strain of life in famished Petrograd. The scenes in Petrograd and along the railway going eastward will not easily be forgotten by anyone who saw them in these days. The old capital of the Tsars was being evacuated. Trains laden with the treasures of museums, the gold reserves of banks, the valuable metal stores of the great factories, were passing out of the termini of Petrograd for days on end. Other trains were crowded with refugees from the regions occupied by the Germans, with demobilized elements of the old army, with wandering bands of Red Guards, and with hungry workmen and landless peasants, seeking new land in the East. At each station the local railwaymen's or workmen's Soviets were issuing their own orders, setting up their own Commissars, and paying little or no heed to imploring telegrams from the Central Soviets in Petrograd and Moscow. Occasionally a band of Red Guards would commandeer a whole train, turn the passengers out and force the driver to take them off in one direction or another. Quite a number of the Red Guard units refused to recognize the authority of the Central Soviet to ratify the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and continued to fight in guerrilla warfare with the Germans in the western provinces. The most famous of these bands was that of Dybenko, the intrepid Bolshevik able-seaman from the Baltic who, with his sailor comrades and workmen from the naval yards in Kronstadt, declared himself 'independent' of the Government that had signed the 'shameful peace' and continued the war as before. He was subsequently arrested by the Red Guards loyal to the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets and the Central Executive, and brought before a revolutionary tribunal which, however, only reprimanded him. This was not before he had with his army traversed a large part of western and south-western Russia, commandeering trains as he went, and finally ending up in the Crimea.

Everywhere it could be seen that the spirit of rebellion stalked the land. There were no more landlords or Cadet bankers to rebel against now, but there were invading Germans, for whom their own treaties were 'scraps of paper', and there were Soviet Commissars in Petrograd and Moscow. The latter represented authority and all authority was anathema in those days. Cyclo-

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

pean fires, smouldering for centuries beneath the surface, were burning themselves out. The primitive instinct for revenge on age-long class oppressors was strong, and did not shrink from theft, murder, rape and outrages on the new defenceless bourgeoisie. In memorable lines a Left Socialist Revolutionary writer [*the poet Alexander Blok; an extract from his famous poem of the Revolution, 'The Twelve', is given at the beginning of this book*] depicted the spirit of these days. Twelve Red Guards, aimlessly wandering, relieving former bank directors of their fur coats, describe to one another the girls they have met in different towns, the methods by which they did them to death in paroxysms of rage bordering both on hate and love. Such men were the personifications of the spirit arising in those days from the abysmal depths.

The political revolution was over, but Russia was only on the threshold of an enormous economic and social revolution that is still in progress today. Who could have imagined the Russia of the latter half of the twentieth century when confronted with the endless tales of disorder, crime, drunkenness and despair which came into the big cities from the countryside in 1918?

From Danov come reports that the palace of the former Governor of Riazan' has been destroyed. . . . The furniture and art objects of the palace were valued at a million roubles. . . . Pictures of noted artists were burned. The peasant women grabbed the Sèvres vases and now use them for sour cream. . . . The stock farm was looted and the thoroughbred stock driven off. . . . Drunkenness and looting have spread. . . . In some cases the peasants have begun to attack each other.

The pogroms and destructions which began in March are still going on in Tula and Samara guberniias. Not a single estate in Tula guberniia has escaped either partial or total destruction. . . . The loss in machinery, livestock and grain amounts to about thirty million roubles.

In Simbirsk guberniia the situation is somewhat similar. Among the art treasures lost is the home of the historian Karamzin . . . the villa of Prince Kurakin, which contained a rare collection of engravings. Thanks to Austrian war prisoners, one building of the Kurakin estate was saved. . . . In Penza guberniia the savagery of the mob was so great that the villas and palaces

POSTSCRIPT TO A REVOLUTION

were set on fire with everything in them. . . .

In some parts, the peasants organized themselves to protect estates. This was also true on the lands of the Cossacks. . . .

Our railway car is wandering through Siberia. . . . We have become used to the 'communistic' régime in Petrograd, but the things that are going on in the provinces, on the railroads and in the railway stations are simply incredible. Language is inadequate to describe the chaos, the anarchy, perpetrated by bands of cut-throats, branded criminals and ex-convicts now calling themselves Bolsheviks. . . . The militia in every town is being removed and replaced by Red Guards. The appearance of these rascals . . . is almost invariably a signal for robberies, murders and removal of fur coats from passers-by. (The latter operation is especially popular in Siberia.)

What are the elements from which these Red Guards are being recruited? In small towns everyone is known by name and the names of the Red Guards are quite significant, being surnames taken from the vocabulary of criminals. . . . These criminal elements, formerly hidden underground . . . have now, under the protection of the Soviet authorities, emerged to the surface. They receive arms, a fixed salary . . . and engage in their trade with the sanction of the law. The roads leading from the railway station to the cities are especially favoured by them. . . . The term Bolshevik has become here a synonym for 'robber', 'thief', 'murderer', etc. . . .

The way the dark masses are being instigated against those who think differently from the Bolsheviks is simply monstrous. . . . At every meeting you can hear threats against Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, who are called 'bloodsuckers', 'fat bourgeois', etc. In most cases it is hard to understand what these newly-born Bolsheviks really want. All one hears are wild outcries calling to murder, plunder, etc.

Almost all the grain is turned to vodka. Practically every village has from fifteen to twenty distilleries. Rye sells at from forty-five to fifty roubles a *pud*, but if turned into home brew . . . it brings twice that amount. So much alcohol is distilled that there is enough for local consumption and for export. . . . Everybody is engaged in this business, even some of the members of the executive committees. One hears such remarks as: 'What kind of

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

freedom is this when a man can't make a bottle of vodka for his own use?'. . .

When under the influence of strong drink, men loot estates and destroy State and private forests. The authorities in the *guberniia* are quite unable to handle the situation, as is evidenced by the following: The commissar of the *guberniia* learned that there were a number of stills in the village of Karpovtsy and that deserters were perpetrating murders and robberies. Gathering a company of a hundred soldiers and officials, he started for the place. He arrived about two in the morning, surrounded the village, and began his search. The dogs and chickens gave the alarm, the village was aroused, and the deserters hid. The search for vodka disclosed that it was the exceptional house that did not have at least a bottle or two of it. A number of stills were also located. By that time the search came to an end, the soldiers got drunk and joined in with the natives in defending 'freedom' and the 'frightened population'.

Sixteen deserters were caught, but sixty of the soldiers disappeared. . . .

The villages are having a 'big drunk'. Village expeditions are sent to procure the 'national wealth', as vodka is called. . . . These expeditions go armed with guns, revolvers and clubs. . . . Not infrequently they run into 'expeditions' from other villages and a pitched battle takes place. Wild, drunken orgies are the order of the day. Old men, young men, women and minors drink. Even tiny children are given alcohol to put them to sleep so that their parents may drink undisturbed. Licentiousness and gambling keep company with this drunkenness. Venereal diseases are spreading fast. . . . Typhus is an everyday visitor in the village. The sale of drugs, guaranteed to cure everything, has also made its appearance. Though their price is high, yet there are buyers. . . .

The village is flooded with paper money . . . and not knowing what to do with it, the peasants have taken to gambling. The favourite game is '21'. Thousands of roubles change hands in an evening.

This lack of law and order has brought forth bands of robbers, thieves and the lynch law. . . . The 'burzhui' are blamed for all the evils of the village . . . for the lack of salt, sugar, etc. . . .

GLOSSARY

Army Committees. These were formed at the front by the soldiers under the influence of the Bolsheviks and their Order No. 1 (see p. 128). The committees aimed at combating the influence of the officers, who for the most part supported the old régime. Each military unit had its committee: at the top level the Central Army Committee co-operated with the General Staff. After the Revolution the committees became directly responsible for supplies and also for the command of the troops in some cases.

Bolsheviks. The most left-wing party in the Petrograd Soviet. The Bolsheviks, as opposed to the Mensheviks (see below), wanted, and got, an immediate uprising on the part of the workers. They were intent on introducing Socialism and removing vestiges of the old régime by force. They relied chiefly on the factory proletariat in Petrograd and Moscow, although they had the sympathy of most of the poor peasants, especially after the nationalization of the land. Lenin was the leader of the party, Trotsky his most active lieutenant after May 1917.

Cadets. A political party formed in Tsarist days, having no connection with the cadets from the officers' school who defended the Provisional Government in 1917. The party got its name from the initials of its longer title, Constitutional Democrats. Composed mainly of Liberals from the propertied classes, it aimed at political reform of a moderate nature, but by April 1917 it found itself on the right wing of the parties making up the Provisional Government. In this month its most vigorous leader, Miliukov, was ejected from the Provisional Government. Its nominal leader, Prince Lvov, hung on to the Premiership until July 21, 1917.

Constituent Assembly. As a political slogan the concept of a Constituent Assembly dated from the nineteenth century. Alexander Herzen, a forerunner of the Revolution, wanted political power to be taken out of the hands of the Tsar and placed in the hands of the people through a popularly elected Assembly on the French model. One of the first acts of the Provisional Government formed in March 1917 was to prepare for a Constituent Assembly which would provide civil rights and render the machinery of government

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

more democratic. The Assembly was postponed, however, and finally dispersed by the Bolsheviks with the help of Lettish troops in January 1918.

Duma. The word means a deliberative body. Established as part of a new semi-constitutional system after the Revolution of 1905, it survived until September 1917, although it had been infused with democratic elements at the time of the March uprising.

Guberniia. The Russian term for a province in the Tsarist régime, and an administrative unit.

Mensheviks. This party split from the Bolsheviks at the 1903 party congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, to which they both belonged. The majority on this occasion (Bolshinstvo) and the minority (Menshinstvo) took their party names from the quarrel (in fact thereafter it was the Bolsheviks who were in the minority, from 1905 until 1917). The Mensheviks disagreed with the Bolsheviks on the timing of the Revolution, although both parties were on the extreme left wing. The Mensheviks looked to a natural evolution towards Socialism in Russia, devoid of the violence that the Bolsheviks thought necessary to introduce into the process. The internationalist and more radical section of the Mensheviks was supported by Trotsky for a long time, before he turned to the Bolsheviks. Menshevik leaders mentioned in this book include Tseretelli, Dan and Martov (an internationalist).

Military Revolutionary Committee. Set up on October 22, 1917, by the Executive Committee of the Soviet in order to control Petrograd and neighbouring garrisons during the Bolshevik armed uprising of November 1917. Later replaced as the agency of revolutionary force by the Extraordinary Commission (the Cheka, the forerunner of the Soviet secret police).

Provisional Government. During the March revolution two authoritative bodies were organized, the provisional committee of the Duma, known as the Provisional Government, and the Soviet. The Provisional Government was recognized by Russia's allies in the war as the legitimate one, although it had to contend with the increasing prestige of the Soviet. The cabinet of the Provisional Government consisted of representatives of the Duma Left and Centre, the Right being excluded. Kerensky and Chkheidze were the only members whose political views lay well to the left. After

GLOSSARY

passing through three successive Coalitions between March and November 1917, the Provisional Government fell under the impact of the Bolshevik armed uprising of November 7th. Some of the Socialist Ministers were released, but when they claimed that the Bolsheviks were rebels, they were deported to Kronstadt, and the Provisional Government was finally dissolved.

Red Guard. A voluntary organization encouraged by the Bolsheviks. Factory workers in the cities armed themselves, collected in bands and supported the Bolsheviks by force and persuasion. They were first formed in 1905, but played a much greater part after March 1917.

Socialist Revolutionaries (or SRs). A left-wing party formed from the populists of the 1890s, who gained much support amongst the peasants in the provinces. The SRs turned to terrorism, and their agents killed many well-known figures, including Grand Duke Sergius, who is mentioned in this book. Together with the Mensheviks they dominated the Soviet formed in March 1917, and were joined by other left-wing leaders like Kerensky, who came to be known as 'March SRs'. They remained in a majority until the autumn of 1917, when they were ousted by the Bolsheviks. The orthodox SRs walked out of the Second Congress of Soviets held on the day of the storming of the Winter Palace, leaving the Left SRs to bring over the poor peasants on to the Bolshevik side. Having disagreed with the Bolsheviks over the need for an armed uprising in November, the orthodox SRs soon lost power, although they still had a majority over the Bolsheviks in the Constituent Assembly held in January 1918. Chernov was the leader of the SRs. The writers Sukhanov and Sorokin also belonged to this party.

Soviet. The word means 'council'. A Soviet of Workers' Deputies was first formed in St. Petersburg on October 26, 1905: in theory each deputy represented 500 workers at meetings. Through the medium of the Soviet the left-wing parties—the SRs, the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks—spread their political aims amongst the masses. In the March Days of 1917 the same parties reformed the Soviet on the same lines as in 1905, except that Soldiers' Deputies were included also in view of the revolutionary temper of the Russian armies. The Soviet met literally a few rooms away from the authorized Provisional Government, in the Tauride Palace. The Soviet, together with its counterparts formed throughout the country, gained in power and swung violently to the left,

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

so that by October 1917 its policy was dominated by the Bolsheviks, who took over from the slightly more moderate Mensheviks and SRs.

Tsarskoe Selo. One of the chief residences of the Tsar, a few miles to the south-east of Petrograd. The Royal Family spent much time there during the troubles after 1905, and was kept under guard there from March to August 1917, before moving to Tobolsk in Siberia. Other royal palaces were the Winter Palace in Petrograd, to which Father Gapon marched in procession on 'Bloody Sunday', 1905, and which later became the seat of the Provisional Government and was besieged by the Bolsheviks in November 1917; and Peterhof, the summer palace on the coast of the Gulf of Finland, north-west of Petrograd.

Zemstvo. A system of provincial and county self-government established in the nineteenth century. It was run mainly by the more liberal local gentry, although in theory even the peasants had a voice. During the war against Germany the *zemstvos* played an important role in supplying the Russian army. After the March uprising of 1917 they were made more democratic in nature, but they were soon superseded by the local Soviets, and were abolished by the Bolsheviks in January 1918.

SOURCES

The sources are given in the order in which they appear in the book.

CHAPTER I

Father Gapon. *The Story of My Life*. 1905.
Krupskaia, N. *Memories of Lenin*. 1942.
Savinkov, B. *Memoirs of a Terrorist*. 1931.
Feldman, C. *The Revolt of the Potemkin*. 1908.
Baring, M. *What I saw in Russia*. 1913.
The Secret Letters of Tsar Nicholas. 1938.

CHAPTER II

Baring, M. *What I saw in Russia*. 1913.
Gorky, M. V. I. *Lenin*. 1931.
Krupskaia, N. *Memories of Lenin*. 1942.
The Secret Letters of Tsar Nicholas. 1938.
Sazonov, S. *Fateful Years*. 1928.
Letters of the Tsaritsa to the Tsar. 1923.
Rodzianko, M. *The Reign of Rasputin*. 1927.
Pares, B. *My Russian Memoirs*. 1931.
Gorky, M. *Fragments from My Diary*. 1924.
Beletsky, S. *The Fall of the Tsarist Regime*. 1924-27.
Vulliamy, C. (editor). *From the Red Archives*. 1929.
Rodzianko, M. *Op. cit.*
Purishkevich, V. *How I Killed Rasputin*. 1924.
Yusupov, Prince F. *Lost Splendour*. 1953.
Paley, Princess. *Souvenirs de Russie*. 1923.
Buchanan, Sir G. *My Mission to Russia*. 1923.
Paley, Princess. *Op. cit.*
Letters of the Grand Dukes to Nicholas II. 1926.
Rodzianko, M. *Op. cit.*

CHAPTER III

Trotsky, L. *History of the Russian Revolution*. 1933.
Vasiliev, V. *The Russian Police and the Revolution*. 1936.

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

- Shulgin, V. *Days*. 1925.
Sukhanov, N. *The Russian Revolution 1917*. 1955.
Sorokin, P. *Leaves from a Russian Diary*. 1924.
Shulgin, V. *Op. cit.*
Sukhanov, N. *Op. cit.*
Shulgin, V. *Op. cit.*
Nicholas II. *Diary*. 1923.
Lukomsky, A. *Memoirs of the Russian Revolution*. 1922.
Sukhanov, N. *Op. cit.*

CHAPTER IV

- Paley, Princess. *Souvenirs de Russie*. 1923.
Wilton, R. *The Last Days of the Romanovs*. 1920.
Nicholas II. *Diary*. 1923.
Paley, Princess. *Op. cit.*
Wilton, R. *Op. cit.*
Kerensky, A. *The Catastrophe*. 1927.
Paléologue, M. *An Ambassador's Memoirs*. 1923.
Sukhanov, N. *The Russian Revolution 1917*. 1955.
Sukhanov, N. *Op. cit.*
Sukhanov, N. *Op. cit.*
Philips Price, M. *My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution*. 1921.
Vulliamy, C. (editor). *From the Red Archives*. 1929.
Pares, B. *My Russian Memoirs*. 1931.
Bruce Lockhart, R. *Memoirs of a British Agent*. 1932.
Golder, F. *Documents of Russian History*. 1927.
Philips Price, M. *Op. cit.*
Sukhanov, N. *Op. cit.*
Pares, B. *Op. cit.*
Allilueva, A. *Memoirs*. 1946.
Paley, Princess. *Op. cit.*
Sukhanov, N. *Op. cit.*
Philips Price, M. *Op. cit.*
Lukomsky, A. *Memoirs of the Russian Revolution*. 1922.
Philips Price, M. *Op. cit.*
Sukhanov, N. *Op. cit.*

CHAPTER V

- Reed, J. *Ten Days that shook the World*. 1960.
Vulliamy, C. (editor). *From the Red Archives*. 1929.

SOURCES

- Reed, J. *Op. cit.*
Delo Naroda, No. 189, November 8, 1917.
Krasnaia Letopis, No. 6, 1923.
Sorokin, P. *Leaves from a Russian Diary*. 1924.
Reed, J. *Op. cit.*
Maliantovich, P. *In the Winter Palace*. 1918.
Delo Naroda, No. 193, November 11, 1917.
Reed, J. *Op. cit.*
Kerensky, A. *The Catastrophe*. 1927.
Philips Price, M. *My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution*.
1921.
Reed, J. *Op. cit.*
Arkhiv Russkoi Revolutsii, 192?-1934.
Buchanan, Sir G. *My Mission to Russia*. 1923.
Sorokin, P. *Op. cit.*
Reed, J. *Op. cit.*
Philips Price, M. *Op. cit.*
Gorky, M. *Fragments from My Diary*. 1924.

CHAPTER VI

- Reed, J. *Ten Days that shook the World*. 1960.
Kerensky, A. *The Catastrophe*. 1927.
Reed, J. *Op. cit.*
From a Russian Diary. (Anon.) 1921.
Sorokin, P. *Leaves from a Russian Diary*. 1924.
Sisson, E. *One Hundred Red Days*. 1931.
Arkhiv Russkoi Revolutsii, 192?-1934.
Izvestiia, January 22, 1918.
Novaia Zhizn', January 22, 1918.
Narodnoe Khoziaistvo, November 1918.
Proletarskaia Revolutsiia, No. 10, 1922.
Wilton, R. *The Last Days of the Romanovs*. 1920.
Nicholas II. Diary. 1923.
Wilton, R. *Op. cit.*
Philips Price, M. *My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution*.
1921.
Bunyan and Fisher. *The Bolshevik Revolution*. 1934.

INDEX

- Alekseev, General, 132, 134, 136, 137, 196, 206
 Aleksei Nicholaevich, Crown Prince, 63, 132, 134, 140, 143, 287-9, 290-2
 Aleksinky, 187, 188
 Alexander I, 58
 Alexander II, 25
 Alexander III, 44
 Alexander Mikhailovich, Grand Duke, 82, 89-94
 Alexandra, Empress of Russia, 54, 57-9, 63, 67, 69, 82, 83, 86, 95, 109, 120, 136, 140-2, 143, 146-8, 192, 270, 283, 285, 289, 290-2
 Aliliuev, A., 188, 190
 Aliliueva, Niura, 188-91
 All-Russian Congress of the Soviets:
 First, 161-5, 243; Second, 222-5, 226, 235, 236, 242-7, 252, 254, 278
 Anastasia Nicholaevna, Grand Duchess, 83, 143, 287-9, 290-2
 Andrew, Grand Duke, 150
 Antonov, 233-4
 Apranksin, Count, 142
 'April Theses', 161

 Baklanov, 261-2
 Baring, Maurice, 46-8, 50-4
 Bauman, 47-8
 Benckendorff, Count, 84, 141, 142, 143, 146, 192
 Bennett, Colonel, 187
 'Black Gang', 47
 Blok, Alexander, 294
 'Bloody Sunday', 26-31, 300
 Bobrinsky, 67
 Bogrov, Dmitri, 57
 Boldyrev, General, 166-7
 Bolsheviks, 108, 110, 124, 128, 152, 153-6, 159, 160-1, 162, 165-6, 169, 182, 186-9, 196, 198-9, 207, 208-12, 213-15, 217-54, 257-60, 265-83, 297, 298
 Bonch-Bruevich, V. D., 124-6
 Boris, Grand Duke, 150
 Botkin, Dr., 288, 289, 290-2

 Bredov, General, 168
 Brest-Litovsk, Peace of, 169, 292, 293
 Buchanan, Sir George, 83-9, 140, 151, 248
 Bukharin, N. I., 278

 Cadets, 133, 138, 160, 184, 210, 216, 224, 225, 229, 230, 253, 276, 280, 293, 297
 Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet (CCBF), 217-20, 226, 260
 Cheka, the, 298
 Cherkassky, 218, 221
 Chernov, Victor, 161, 164-5, 183-6, 198, 199, 207, 278-9, 299
 Chkheidze, N. S., 110, 120, 122, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 151, 155, 156-8, 159-60, 184
 Coalition, 160; First, 161, 164, 165, 169, 175, 176, 182, 183, 186; Second, 192-3, 195
 Constituent Assembly, 160, 208, 210, 212, 227, 271-80, 297-8, 299
 Cossacks, 28-9, 96-8, 105, 187, 226, 257, 259, 262-4 *et passim*
 Council of People's Commissars, 244-5, 254
 Cyril Vladimirovich, Grand Duke, 88-9, 94, 130
 Czech Legion, 289, 292

Daily Mirror, 168
 Dan, 222, 223, 224-5, 244, 298
 Decembrists, 25
Delo Naroda, 225-6, 248
 Derevenko (sailor), 144
 Dmitri, Grand Duke, 75, 77-8, 81, 82, 150
 Dobrynin, Constantin, 290, 292
 Dolgoruky, Count Vasily Alexandrovich, 142, 144, 288, 289
 Dorofeev, 285-6
 Duma, 45, 48, 50-4, 55, 56, 58, 60, 68-9, 85-6, 87, 91, 92, 95, 103-13, 114-25, 127-34, 137, 164, 298; Second, 57; Fourth, 26, 109

INDEX

- Dybenko, 217-20, 260-4, 281, 292, 293
- Ehrlich, P., 225
- Ekaterinburg, 289-92
- Emelianova, Lesha, 183
- Engels, F., 224
- First All-Russian Congress of Soviets,
see All-Russian Congress of Soviets,
First
- First World War, 25, 57-63, 84-6,
165-73, 203, 210-11, 217
- Feldmann, Constantine, 37-45
- Feodorovna, Elizabeth, G r a n d
Duchess, 34-6
- Figner, Vera, 150, 151
- Flavell, Dr., 61
- Fragments from My Diary*, see Gorky,
Maxim
- Fredericks, Count, 150
- Ganfam, M. I., 280
- Gapon, Georgi Appolonovich, 26-32,
44, 300
- Gibbes, Sidney Ivanovich, 287-9
- Gillard (Swiss tutor), 288, 289
- Gorbunov, N. P., 282
- Gorky, Maxim, 54-5, 61-3, 254, 255-6
- Gotz., J. N., 223
- Grusenberg (lawyer), 116
- Guchkov, Alexander, 133, 134, 135-6,
138, 161
- Gvozdev, 102, 111
- Hedwig-Aloisovna, Countess, 150
- Hendrykova, Countess, 287, 289
- Hvostov, A. N., 64
- Imperial family, see Nicholas II
- Ipatiev, 290, 292
- Ismailovich, Catherine, 150
- Izgeev, 280-1
- Izvestiia*, 124, 128, 153, 183, 188, 225,
243, 281
- Kabalov, General, 100
- Kaliaiev, 33-6
- Kamenev, L. B., 184, 212, 251, 282
- Karakhan, 215
- Karamzin, N. M., 294
- Karelin, 286
- Keeble, Peter, 168-9
- Kerensky, Alexander Feodorovich, 26,
106, 107, 108, 110, 113, 120, 127-8,
129-30, 133, 146-8, 150-1, 152, 161,
163-4, 169-70, 188, 191, 192, 193, 194,
195, 197, 198, 199, 200-4, 206, 207,
208, 210, 213, 222, 224, 226, 229,
231, 232, 233, 235, 241-2, 243, 249,
250, 254, 257, 259, 260, 262-5, 280,
298, 299
- Kharash, 247
- Kishkin, 232-4, 240
- Kitchener, Lord, 85
- Klembovsky, General, 204
- Knox, General, 187, 248
- Kobylnsky, Colonel, 141-3, 145, 283-6
- Kokoshkin, 280-1
- Kollontai, Alexander, 251
- Kolomitsev, Admiral, 167
- Kononov, Minister, 227-8, 233, 241
- Kopeika, 124
- Kornilov affair, 137, 141-3, 199-204,
206-7, 208, 210, 217
- Kornilov, General, 141-2, 194-5, 197,
198-9, 200-4, 206-8, 216, 260, 283
- Kotsebue, Captain, 141
- Kovolyevsky, Professor, 51-2
- Krasnov, P. N., 264
- Kronstadt uprising, 175-86, 188, 189,
191, 192, 217-18
- Krymov, General, 199, 203
- Krynov, Father, 284
- Kshesinskaia, 150, 152-4, 159
- Kurakin, Prince, 294
- Kusmin, Mr., 114, 115
- Land Decree, 252
- Lavrentiev, 30
- Lazarev, Colonel, 142
- Lazovert, Dr., 70, 77, 81
- Lebedev, P. N., 249-50
- Left Socialist Revolutionary Party,
243, 245, 246, 278, 294, 299
- Lenin, Krupskaja, 31-2, 55-6, 154, 187
- Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich, 26, 31, 32, 54-6,
96, 110, 154-9, 161, 162-3, 164, 175,
186, 188, 189, 190-1, 198, 209, 212,
213, 217, 222, 242, 243, 244-5, 250-2,
254, 258, 272, 276, 278, 280, 283, 292
(see also Ulianov)
- Lieber, 224
- Lloyd George, David, 85
- Lockhart, Sir Robert Bruce, 169-71
- Lopatin, 150

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

- Lukirsky, General, 221
 Lukomsky, General A., 137-8, 198-9, 200-4
 Lvov, G. E., 138, 199, 200-1, 203, 297
 MacDonald, Ramsay, 54
 Makarov, Admiral, 177
 Maklakov, 79
 Maliantovich, P., 232-4
 Malkin, A. T., 236
Manchester Guardian, 175, 254
 March Days, 61, 96-139, 154, 161, 180, 181, 274, 299
 March Revolution, *see* March Days
 Maria Nicholaevna, Grand Duchess, 83, 140, 143, 287-9, 290-2
 Marie Theatre, 149-52
 Martemian, Abbot, 65
 Martov, J., 184, 222, 224, 225, 246, 298
 Marx, Karl, 163, 224
 Maslov, S. L., 234-5
 Mensheviks, 110, 155, 161, 209, 210, 216, 222, 224, 236, 243, 244, 278, 295, 298, 299-300
 Menzhinsky, 282-3
 Michael Alexandrovich, Grand Duke, 94, 135, 137, 140
 Military Revolutionary Committee, 222, 224-5, 226, 227, 252-3, 260, 266, 298
 Miliukov, Paul, 133, 139, 161, 297
 Mirsky, Prince, 25
 Morozov, 150
 Moscow State Conference, 193-7
 Muranov, 267
 Muravev, Colonel, 260
 Muromtsev, C. A., 51
My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution, *see* Philips Price
 Nicholas I, 25
 Nicholas II, 26-8, 44-6, 48-9, 50, 57, 58, 59, 63, 66, 67, 82, 83-8, 89, 95, 96, 109, 117, 120, 132, 134, 135, 136-9, 140, 142-4, 146-8, 152, 160, 163, 191-2, 254, 269, 271, 283-92
 Nicholas Nicholaevich, Grand Duke, 58, 59, 60, 94
 Nikolaevsky Boulevard (Odessa), 37, 38
 Nilov, Admiral, 138
Novaia Zhizn', 159-60, 194, 254
 November Revolution, 213-56
 Novgorod address, 93
Novoe Vremia, 171-3
 October Manifesto, 45, 46, 133
 Octobrist party, 133, 160
 Odessa, 36-44
 Okhrana, 102
 Olga Nicholaevna, Grand Duchess, 57, 83, 144, 287-9, 290-2
 Olga, Queen of Greece, 82
 Order Number One, 128-9, 133, 165
 Paget, Lady Muriel, 187
 Paléologue, M. I., 148-52
 Paley, Princess, 82-3, 88, 89, 140-1, 144-5, 191-2
 Pares, Bernard, 61, 167-9, 186-8
 Paul, Grand Duke, 82-3, 140-1
 Pavlovna, Grand Duchess Maria, 94-5
 People's Will Party, 25
 Pereverzev, 187
 Pestovsky, 282-3
 Petrograd, 60 and *passim* throughout
 Philips Price, 175-83, 194-7, 204-8, 242-6, 252-4, 292-6
 Plekhanov, G. V., 32
 Politburo of Bolshevik Central Committee, 212
 Populist Socialists, 107
 Port Arthur, 26, 178
 Portsmouth, Treaty of, 44
 Prince Potemkin (the battleship), 36-44, 49
 Pre-Parliament, the, 208-12
 Prokopovich, T., 236-7
 Protopopov, A. D., 67, 71, 73, 83, 87, 94, 100, 101, 102, 107, 108
 Provisional Committee, 103, 107, 110, 119, 129-34, 137
 Provisional Government, 133, 137, 138, 154, 160-1, 169, 179, 188, 198-9, 201-3, 215-16, 219, 222, 225, 226, 232-4, 241, 242, 248, 249, 265, 298-9, 300
 Purishkevich, Vladimir Mitrophanovich, 67-70, 75, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81
 Raskolnikov, 183-6
 Rasputin, Gregory Efimovich, 59, 63-83, 87, 107, 145
 Rasvozov, Rear-Admiral, 217-21
Rech', 253
 Reed, John, 213-17, 222-5, 228-32, 236-41, 246-7, 250-2, 257-62, 265-9

INDEX

- Rengarten, I., 217-22
 Ressin, Major-General, 142
 Reval, 218
 Revolutionary Russia, 33-4
 Right Socialist Revolutionary Party, 244, 276, 277, 278, 299
 Ritner, Klavdia Mikhailovna, 287
 Rodzianko, Michael Vladimirovich, 59-60, 66-7, 94-5, 105, 106, 108, 109, 117, 119, 120, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 136, 202
 Romanov family, *see* Nicholas II and various
 Romanovsky, General, 202
 Rosanov, 243
 Roshal, 183
 Rudensky, 221
 Russian Daily News, 236
 Russo-Japanese War, 26, 44
 Rutenberg, 240
 Ruzsky, General, 60, 132, 134, 136, 166-7

 St. Petersburg, 28-31, 52-3, and *see* Petrograd
 Salazkin, 235
 Sandro, *see* Alexander Mikhailovich, Grand Duke
 Savinkov, B., 33-5, 198, 199, 200-3
 Sazonov, S., 58, 84
 Schastny, A. M., 221
 Schreider, 236-7
 Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, *see* All-Russian Congress of Soviets, Second
 Sergei, Father, 65
 Sergius, Grand Duke, 33-5, 299
 Shcheglovitov, Ivan Grigorevich, 108
 Shingarev, 103-5, 280-1
 Shliapnikov, 153-4, 157, 158
 Shulgin, Vasil Vitalevich, 103, 110, 113, 119-20, 129-36, 138
 Shvetsov, 277
 Sisson, Edgar, 273-80
 Skobelev, M. D., 110, 115, 155, 156
 Skovokhodov, P. A., 63
 Social Democrats, 37, 40, 42, 115, 117, 136, 211, 224, 249
 Socialist Revolutionary Party, 25, 31, 33, 110, 113, 153, 155, 161, 164-5, 193, 207, 209, 210, 216, 224-6, 236, 243, 244, 249, 271, 278-9, 295, 299-300
 Sokolov, N. D., 128-9

 Sorokin, P., 113-19, 226, 227-8, 248-50, 272, 299
 Soukhotin, 75, 77
 Soviet of Workers' Deputies, 49, 110-12, 117, 119, 121-9, 131, 132, 138-9, 157, 159, 160-2, 184, 195, 216-25, 247, 298, 299-300
 Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, 112, 120, 124, 153, 162, 198-9, 202, 218
 Sovnarkom, the, 281-2
 Spiridonova, 278
 Stalin, Joseph, 188, 269, 282
 Stankevich, 231
 Starkov, Ivan, 292
 Stolypin, P. A., 56-7
 Stürmer, B. V., 67
 Sukhanov, N. N., 110, 113, 120-9, 138-9, 152-4, 155-9, 159-60, 183-6, 188, 193-4, 208-12, 299
 Sumarokov, Elston, Count, *see* Yusupov, Prince Felix
 Sverdlov, 244, 277

 Tatiana Nicholaevna, Grand Duchess, 57, 83, 144, 287-9, 290-2
 Tatishchev, 288, 289
 Tauride Palace, *see* Duma
 Ten Days that Shook the World, *see* Reed, John
 Tereshchenko, M. I., 240
 Times, The, 32
 Tobolsk, 191, 283-9, 300
 Tolstoy, L., 129, 267, 271
 Trotsky, L., 96-9, 159-60, 161, 183-6, 188, 209-12, 215-17, 222, 224, 243, 244, 254, 269, 298
 Trudoviks, 164
 Tsarskoe Selo, 45, 66, 83, 84, 140, 141-2, 143-8, 169, 191, 257-60, 283, 300
 Tseretelli, I., 162, 278-9, 298

 Ulianov, V. I. (Lenin), 282
 United Social Democrats, 246
 Uritsky, 272, 277
 Ushakov, General, 166

 Vakulintchuk, Grigory, 39
 'Varshavianka', the, 40
 Vasiliev, Director of Police, 100-3
 Vasiliev, Father, 283-4
 Vassiliev, 29-30

WITNESSES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Verderevsky, 219 | Wilhelm II, 164, 270 |
| Vershinin, 142-3 | Wilson, Woodrow, 273 |
| Viazemsky, Prince, 133 | Winter Palace, 26, 27, 102, 226, 227-34, 236-40, 248-9 |
| Viburov, Madame Anna, 83, 145 | Witte, S. J., 44, 45, 46, 50 |
| Vinner, Lieutenant, 262 | Women's Day, 96-7, 98, 99-100 |
| Vladimirs, <i>see</i> Pavlovna and Cyril Vladimirovich | |
| Voekov, General, 83 | Yurovsky, Commandant, 290-1 |
| Vogak, General, 171 | Yusupov, Prince Felix, 68-82 |
| Volkonsky, Vice-President, 107 | |
| Volodarsky, 225 | Zinoviev, G. E., 212, 279 |
| Voyeïkov, General, 150 | Zorin, 225 |
| Vpered, 32 | Zubov, K., 222 |



GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD

London: 40 Museum Street, W.C.1

Auckland: 24 Wyndham Street

Bombay: 15 Graham Road, Ballard Estate, Bombay 1

Bridgetown: P.O. Box 222

Buenos Aires: Escritorio 454-459, Florida 165

Calcutta: 17 Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta 13

Cape Town: 109 Long Street

Hong Kong: 44 Mody Road, Kowloon

Ibadan: P.O. Box 62

Karachi: Karachi Chambers, McLeod Road

Madras: Mohan Mansions, 38c Mount Road, Madras 6

Mexico: Villalongin 32-10, Piso, Mexico 5, D.F.

Nairobi: P.O. Box 4536

New Delhi: 13-14 Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 1

São Paulo: Avenida 9 De Julho 1138-Ap. 51

Singapore: 36c Prinsep Street, Singapore 7

Sydney, N.S.W.: Bradbury House, 55 York Street

Tokyo: 10 Kanda-Ogawamachi, 3-Chome, Chiyoda-ku

Toronto: 91 Wellington Street West, Toronto 1

A KEY TO SOVIET POLITICS

THE CRISIS OF THE 'ANTI-PARTY' GROUP

ROGER PETHYBRIDGE

To the political historian, Soviet events present as great a problem as medieval history, for in both fields important sources are completely lacking, while others are of a fragmentary or unreliable nature.

It so happens that the changes in the Soviet government after the 'Crisis' of June 1957 are probably better documented than perhaps any other political upheaval in Soviet history, because the Soviet press and party journals devoted an unusual amount of attention to the June Crisis; because information on the crisis, which was kept secret in the usual Soviet manner, was allowed to leak out slowly in the subsequent fall of Zhukov in 1957 and Bulganin in 1958, and the renewed attack on the 'Anti-Party' group at the Twenty-Second Congress in 1961; and finally because certain non-Soviet sources claimed to have seen the stenographic record of the Central Committee Meeting of June 1957 and have written accounts of the proceedings which tallied in most respects with the Soviet account of the crisis.

This book is the first full-scale attempt to analyse the present internal struggle for power in Russia, and is of the highest importance to the understanding of Soviet policy in the world today. The author's sources are all either Soviet or non-Soviet Communist.

Demy 8vo.

21s. net

RUSSIA FORTY YEARS ON

M. PHILIPS PRICE

The future of civilization depends on whether the West and Russia can somehow live together, each keeping its own way of life. Mr Philips Price is one of the very few people alive today who has lived and travelled in Tsarist Russia and also was in the centre of things in Petrograd and Moscow during the October Revolution, when he met Lenin. In his book he looks back on Russia over a period of from forty to fifty years and describes his last visit there in the autumn of 1959. He looks at what Russia is today and compares it with the Russia he remembered years ago. He visits scenes of great events which he witnessed in the past and he talks to Russian citizens of today. Russia has changed and Mr Price shows how the trends are likely to continue.

Though the book is mainly about Russia, there are two chapters at the end about Germany, especially about that part which is under Russian influence. He tries to find out if Russian influence is having any effect in the Eastern part of Germany. Having seen Russian Communism in its homeland, he compares it with what can be seen of it in Central Europe. His wife, who is German-born, adds a chapter on her reaction to Russian Communism in the early days of the Revolution and today.

Demy 8vo.

18s. net

LIBRARY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

VOLUME I

REVISIONISM

ESSAYS ON THE HISTORY OF MARXIST IDEAS

Edited by LEOPOLD LABEDZ

The book deals with the history of ideas associated with Marxist movements. It gives an historical perspective to various reinterpretations of the original doctrine. All ideas which set into a canon sooner or later require revision. When revision comes from above, one dogma is replaced by another. When it comes from independent thinkers it is considered heresy. Heresy is the inevitable shadow of every orthodoxy and Marxism is no exception. The first great revisionist debate occurred over sixty years ago and it foreshadowed the changes in the character of the socialist movement. After Stalin's death there was an outbreak of revisionist ideas in the Communist countries.

The symposium also provides material on the Soviet attitude to revisionism and gives the necessary background for the understanding of the evolution of Communist ideology.

Demy 8vo.

42s. net

THE SOVIET REVOLUTION

1917-1939

RAPHAEL R. ABRAMOVITCH

This history, by the lone remaining public figure in the leadership of the Russian Social Democratic Party, is an important contribution to the understanding of the Soviet October Revolution of 1917. It covers in great detail the whole period from the February Revolution of 1917 (when the author was elected to the Petrograd Soviet) till the outbreak of the Second World War, passing through the various intermediate phases of the October Revolution, the Peace of Brest-Litovsk, the Civil War, the struggle for the leadership of the party, reaching its climax with the complete triumph of Stalin. It provides not only a fresh perspective upon one of the major historical experiences of our era, but a flood of little-known detail which helps make the events more intelligible. It is, in a sense, a part of history commenting on itself.

George Kennan (former US Ambassador to the USSR): 'There are very few people now alive who have anything like the combination of Abramovitch's memories and authority with relation to the Russian Revolution and his competence as a writer and observer of the Russian scene.'

Demy 8vo.

45s. net

THE KREMLIN

NERVE-CENTRE OF RUSSIAN HISTORY

VICTOR ALEXANDROV

The Kremlin has for centuries been the nerve-centre of Russian history. Everything has had its origins in its precincts. The history of Russia from the twelfth century, with a brief interval during which power was transferred to Petrograd, is inextricably bound up with its development. It was there that the czars were crowned and buried and on many occasions it was the scene of their assassination. Everything was nurtured there: religion, dreams of power, absolutism, favouritism, cruel repression and sheer insanity. But through triumphs, setbacks and tragic periods of chaos, the rulers, whatever their names, have pursued the same policy. Their victories, the lessons drawn from their defeats, everything reverted to the Kremlin, where cathedrals stood as monuments of devotion and expiation and ministries became manifold.

Demy 8vo.

30s. *net*

KINO

A HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN AND SOVIET FILM

JAY LEYDA

It is primarily in the Soviet Union that the film has been used with a consciousness of its persuasive powers, and this history gives a full account of the film's development as an art in the service of that society.

Concluding with the problems of the present, this first comprehensive history of the film in Russia begins with the Lumieres' filming of the last tsar's coronation in 1896. For the first time full attention is given to the large and important Russian film industry before the revolutions of 1917, and to its many links with the emerging Soviet film. The Russian film's continuing history is set against the connected background of Russia's social and artistic progress of the past fifty years.

The author's three years of work in Soviet film schools and studios gave him the opportunity to examine all Russian and Soviet films of importance, many never seen abroad, and his personal acquaintance with the leading film-makers of all Soviet nationalities makes his account of their careers colourful and authoritative.

The history's appeal is to the general reader as well as the specialist. It is fully documented, both with newly translated statements by creators and critics, and with rich illustrations, many published for the first time.

Sm. Roy. 8vo.

42s. *net*

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN

A KEY TO SOVIET POLITICS

ROGER PETHYBRIDGE

To the political historian, Soviet events present as great a problem as mediaeval history, for in both fields important sources are completely lacking, while others are of a fragmentary or unreliable nature. In Soviet history particularly, the sudden exposure of fresh information frequently upsets the theories historians have delicately constructed from the scanty information available to them.

It so happens that the changes in the Soviet government after the 'Crisis' of June 1957 are probably better documented than perhaps any other political upheaval in Soviet history, because the Soviet press and party journals devoted an unusual amount of attention to the June crisis; because information on the crisis, which was kept secret in the usual Soviet manner, was allowed to leak out slowly in the subsequent fall of Zhukov in 1957 and Bulganin in 1958 and the renewed attack on the 'Anti-Party' group at the Twenty-second Congress in 1961; and finally because certain non-Soviet sources claimed to have seen the stenographic record of the Central Committee Meeting of June 1957, and have written accounts of the proceedings which tallied in most respects with the Soviet account of the crisis.

Mr Pethybridge believes that this crisis of the 'Anti-Party' group does in fact illuminate many other related topics in Soviet politics, and that the extreme importance of the subject has been made doubly clear by the events of the Twenty-second Party Congress. The crisis is, in fact, 'the key to Soviet politics'. This book is the first full-scale attempt to analyse the present internal struggle for power in Russia, and is of the highest importance to the understanding of Soviet policy in the world today. The author's sources are all either Soviet or non-Soviet Communist.

'Mr Pethybridge marshals all the available information, analyses it intelligently, and presents his findings in the form of a readable narrative account. The results are most worthwhile.' *The Economist*

Demy 8vo. 21s. net

THE KREMLIN

VICTOR ALEXANDROV

Here is the story of a gigantic citadel, of its grandeur and its horrors, of its masters, famous and infamous, and of the scenes, both splendid and terrible, which its stones have witnessed since the Kremlin's foundation 850 years ago.

Demy 8vo. Illustrated 30s. net

THE SOVIET REVOLUTION

RAPHAEL R. ABRAMOVITCH

'... a stimulating and often controversial account of the Leninist and Stalinist era.' *The Financial Times*

'... a volume of extraordinary dignity and value... the narrative is so richly studded with illuminating sidelights, either entirely fresh or rescued from oblivion, that an old familiar scene is transformed and terribly brought to life.' EDWARD CRANKSHAW in *The Observer*

Sm. Roy. 8vo. 45s. net

books that matter